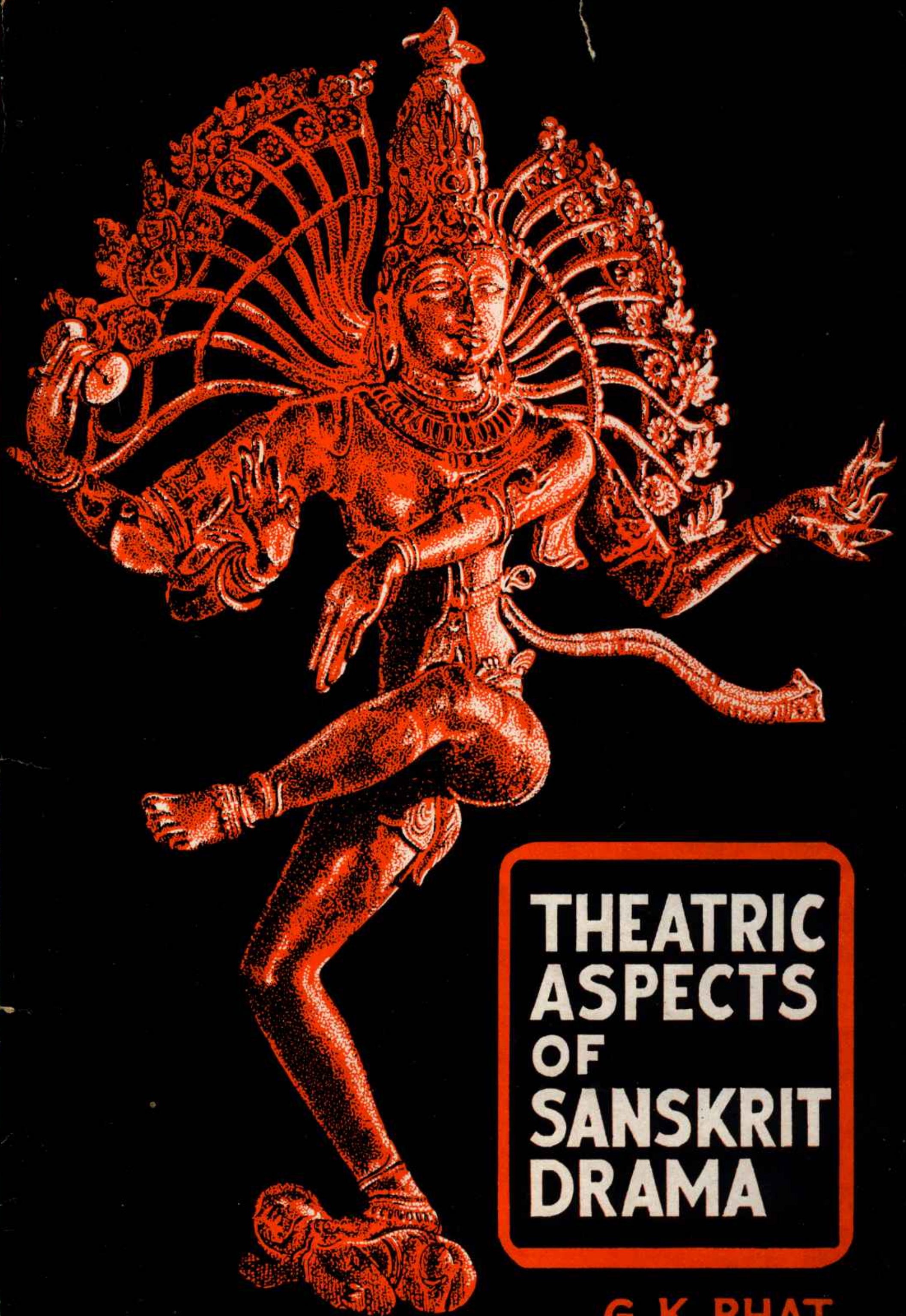


THEATRIC ASPECTS OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

G. K. BHAT

Post-Graduate and Research Department Series No. 18

Theatric Aspects of Sanskrit Drama

by

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FOREWORD

It is highly gratifying that Professor Bhat has assiduously sustained his critical interest in the theory and practice of Sanskrit drama. Drama is sometimes defined as poetry in action - with special emphasis on the words 'in action'. This explains why the theatrical aspect of drama should be found as engrossing as - or perhaps more engrossing than - the literary aspect. Indeed, I remember that, a few years ago, an exclusive and independent 'International Conference on Sanskrit Drama in Performance' was organized at the University of Hawaii. The papers presented at that conference, however, covered a wide spectrum - from the theatre of Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* to the various forms of regional theatre now current in India.

It has been pointed out that, with all the peoples of the earth, the theatre was nourished from two sources - from the element of cult and from the element of game, the latter element generating the *mimus*. When these two factors cross and meet, the spark of the theatre is kindled. The ceremonial and magico-religious origins of the drama are closely interwoven with those activities of man which derive from his being *homo ludens*. It would be rewarding to examine these observations in the light of the substantial

material so ably and systematically brought together by Professor Bhat.

I have referred above to Professor Bhat's critical interest in the theory and practice of drama. In the context of the present book, I should like to add that Professor Bhat also evinces a creative interest in the subject; for, I know how he had personally and actively supervised the construction of a stage according to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*, with *Raṅgaśīrṣa* and two *Mattavāraṇis*, for the performance of his own Marathi adaptation of the *Mudrārākṣasa*. I do not think that there can be a stronger recommendation than this for this small but sound treatise.

Bhandarkar Oriental
Research Institute,
Poona
October 11, 1982

R. N. Dandekar

PREFACE

I was invited by the authorities of the University of Bombay to deliver lectures on an Indological subject under the 'Principal Dr. H. R. Karnik Indological Lectureship Endowment', for 1979. The lectures were delivered at the University Club House, B Road, Churchgate, Bombay, on January 21, 22 and 23, 1980. They are now offered here fully expanded into book form, complete with notes and sketches.

I chose my subject in consultation with the Head of the University Department of Sanskrit. I had already discussed some of the aspects of this subject quite elaborately in my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī* and its sequel, *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, both dealing with the theory of drama in Sanskrit. I was also required to cover parts of it in my earlier book, *Sanskrit Drama : A Perspective on Theory and Practice*. The topics in the present book are the same; and a reader of the three books may find some identical material here. It is inevitable; for, we are deating with śāstric, theoretical material, and we cannot alter it, or even re-word it, in order to satisfy somebody's desire or expectation for novelty. But what I have done here is to bring the relevant material together and under a single perspective of Theatric Aspects of Sanskrit Drama. I have endeavoured to relate it to dramatic practice,

illustrating the theoretical concepts and precepts from the classical plays. I sincerely hope that the general reader and all those who are interested in theatre movement and drama production will find this effort useful and helpful.

I wish to thank the authorities of the University for giving me an opportunity to speak to an audience of university teachers, students and interested public. I thank the members of the University Department of Sanskrit also for attending to my personal convenience and for giving me the facilities I needed. My listeners have placed me under a debt of gratitude by giving me a very intelligent and lively response.

Let me also thank my senior colleague and esteemed friend Dr. Karnik whose generosity has made this lectureship possible. I am happy that I could participate in the scheme endowed by him, and that he and Mrs. Karnik could attend all the three lectures.

It is, however, exceedingly sad that Dr. Karnik is not with us now to see the lectures published in a book-form. My regret is both academic and personal.

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G. K. Bhat

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These lectures should have been normally published by the University of Bombay. But several difficulties have come in the way. I thank the University Authorities for granting me permission to get them published elsewhere on certain conditions.

Here, I am glad to acknowledge that,

(i) " The lectures were delivered under the Principal Dr. H. R. Karnik Indological Lectureship Endowment in the University of Bombay in accordance with the terms of the Endowment ";

(ii) " The copyright of the lectures remains vested in the University. "

I am deeply obliged to Dr. R. N. DANDEKAR, Hon. Secretary, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, for accepting this work for publication under the conditions laid down by the Bombay University (Vide No. Pb./573 of 1980, dated Bombay 8th August, 1980).

Bharata's stage showing *Raṅgaśirṣa* and the two *Mattavāraṇī-s* (pp. xv–xix) is a sketch drawn from the construction prepared for the Marathi performance of the *Mudrārākṣasa*, given by Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Bombay. The stage was taken to Weimar, DDR, for the German Language performance at the Fourth World Sanskrit Conference, 1979.

Original photographs : Courtesy of Dr. Bal Bhalerao, (Secretary, Mumbai Marathi Sahitya Sangha, Drama Branch) and Shrimati Vijaya Mehta (Director of the play). I am grateful to both of them for their assistance and co-operation. I also thank the artist G. V. Deshpande for preparing the sketches for me.

August, 1982 **G. K. Bhat**

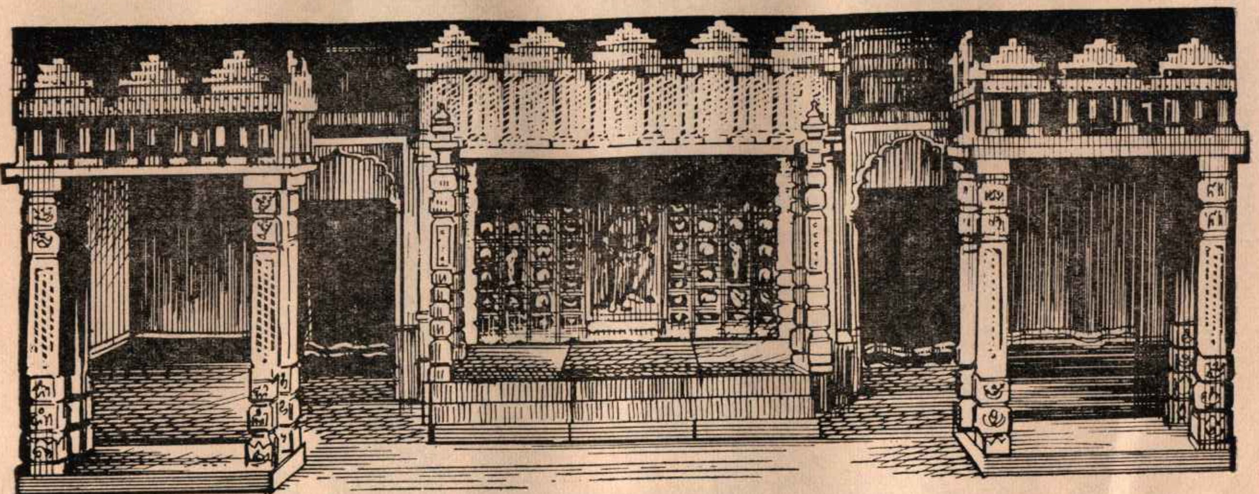
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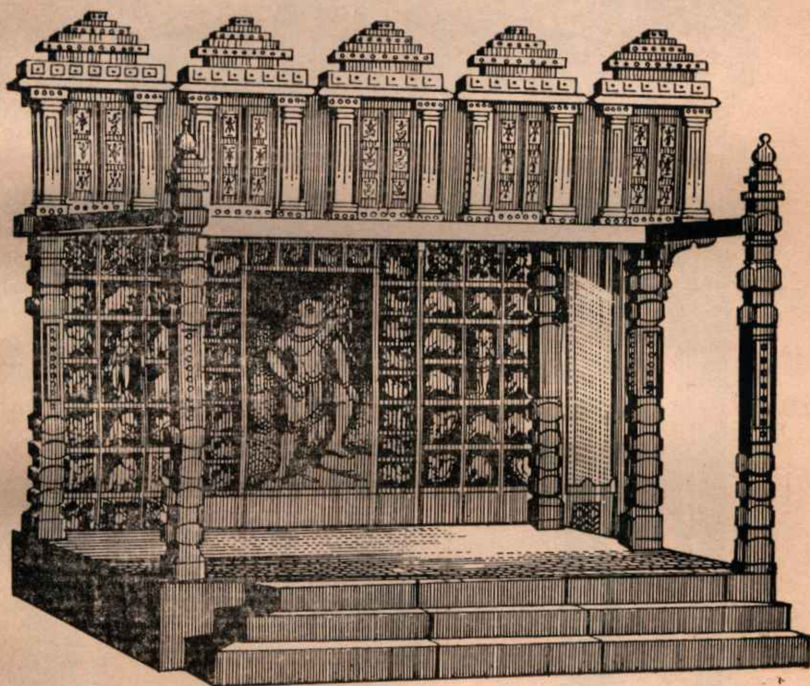
THEATRIC ASPECTS OF SANSKRIT DRAMA

"क्रीडनीयकमिच्छामो
दृश्यं श्रव्यं च यद् भवेत् ॥"

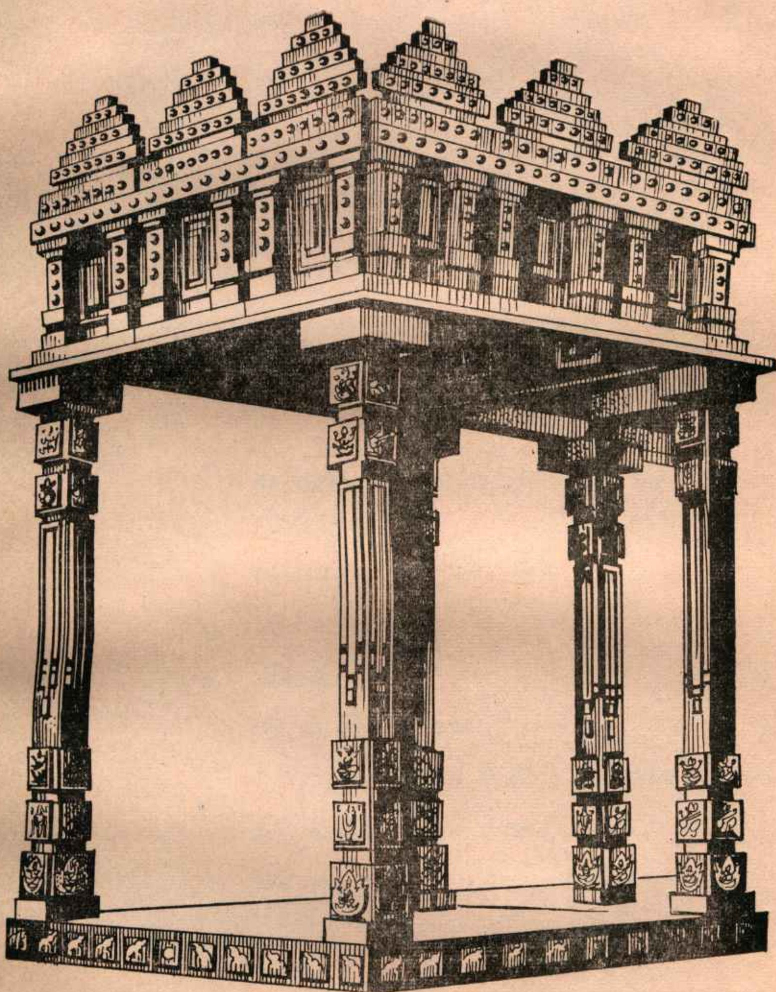
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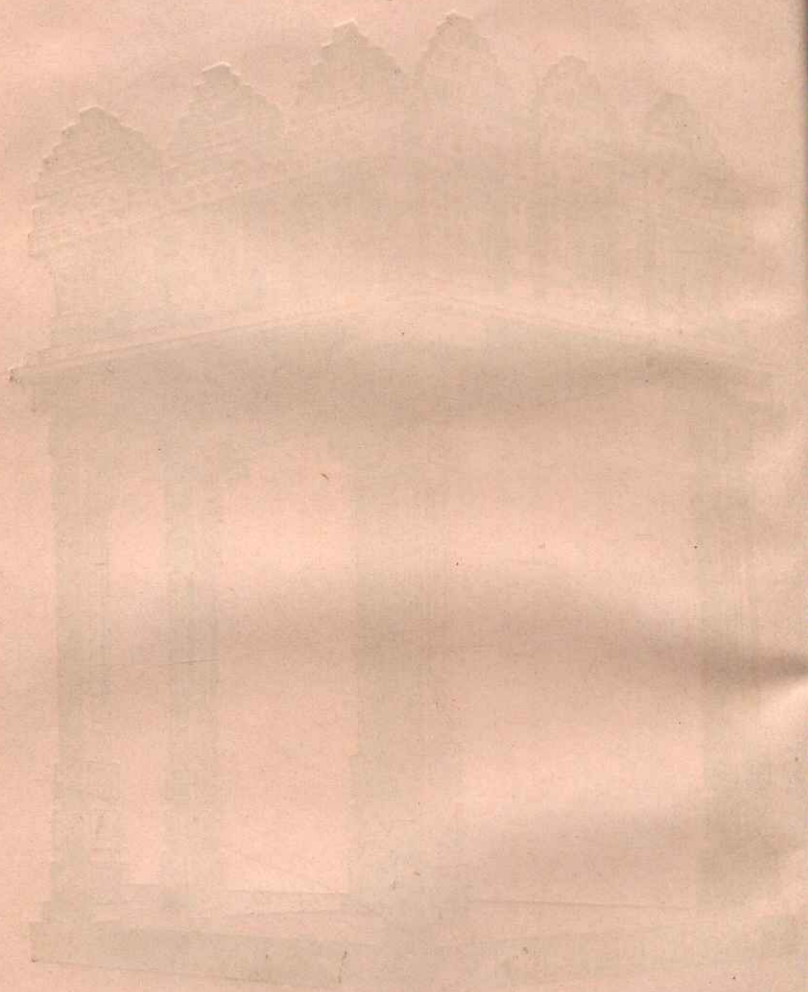
STAGE CONSTRUCTED FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF 'MUDRĀRĀKṢASA'



RAṄGAŚĪRṢA रङ्गशीर्ष



MATTAVĀRAṆĪ मत्तवारणी



1

CONCEPT OF NĀṬYA

1. *Bharata's statements expressing the concept of nāṭya*
2. *Lokavṛtta and Anukaraṇa*
3. *Bhāva*
4. *Abhinaya*
5. *Nāṭya and Rūpaka*
6. *Nāṭya, Nṛtya and Nṛtta : Interrelation*
7. *Literary aspect of drama*
8. *Western concept : Oriental view*

(1)

Bharata makes the following statements[1] which are vital for understanding his concept of *nāṭya* :

(a) 'The *nāṭya* in this world will be an imitation (*anukaraṇa*) of the seven islands'.

(b) '*Nāṭya* is a descriptive or representational statement of the emotional states (*bhāva*) of the entire triple world'.

(c) 'I have made this *nāṭya* as an imitation of the actions and behaviour of the people (*lokavṛtta*); it draws from the activities of the best, the middling and the low men; it consists of various conditions (of human life) (*nānā-avasthā*) and is enriched by various emotional states (*nānā-bhāva-upasaṁpanna*)'.

These statements are expected to give direction to our understanding of the concept of *nāṭya*. An

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1. Cf. *Bharata-Nāṭyaśāstra* (NS. GOS ed. in all references):

(a) सप्तद्वीपानुकरणं नाट्यमेतद् भविष्यति । NS. I. 117.

(b) त्रैलोक्यस्यास्य सर्वस्य नाट्यं भावानुकीर्तनम् । NS. I. 107.

(c) नानाभावोपसंपन्नं नानावस्थान्तरात्मकम् ।
लोकवृत्तानुकरणं नाट्यमेतन् मया कृतम् ॥ NS. I. 112.

analysis and an explanation of the ideas expressed here will shed light on some important aspects of the concept.

(2)

To begin with, *nāṭya* is *lokavṛtta*, what happens to the world of beings and to the people of the world; the actions and behaviour of the people. The range is very wide, because the phrases 'seven islands' and 'triple world' are intended to include the entire universe as known geographically (or imaginatively) to the ancient thinkers. It is, thus, not only the human beings but also the gods, demons, denizens of the nether world, and mythical and legendary beings, that could be included in a dramatic representation, if necessary. All living beings and creatures capable of actions, emotions, and of behaviour directed by them, have a place in *nāṭya*. Further, the dramatic representation need not be selective, in the sense that certain categories of beings only may be represented in it; excellent, middling and low men, all can find a place here.[2] In other words, the world of *nāṭya* is as embracing and comprehensive as the vast

2. Cf. NS. I. 113[a] : उत्तमाधममध्यानां नराणां कर्मसंश्रयम् ।

universe itself; what happens in the world and to its inhabitants is the subject-matter and content of *nāṭya*.

This is the stuff of which literature is made. But there are other kinds of writing like that of science, history and reportage or record. The distinctive characteristics that keep literature in a separate category are suggested by Bharata in the first two statements quoted here : they are 'imitation' and 'representation of emotional states.'

Bharata's idea of *nāṭya* as imitation (*anukaraṇa*) is matched by Aristotle's conception of tragedy and comedy as 'imitation of an action' of a particular kind and in a particular manner. Later Sanskrit writers like Dhanañjaya echo Bharata's words.[3] The notion of 'imitation' seems to have been extended to the major sphere of art in Western literary criticism too. It is stated, for instance, that 'art imitates life' or 'art holds a mirror to nature'. This is not, however, a question of agreement among the literary thinkers. What is necessary is to determine precisely the content of 'imitation' in the context of art.

3. Cf. *Daśarūpaka*, I. 7 : अवस्थानुकृतिर्नाट्यम्··· । Also, *Viṣṇu-dharmottara-Purāṇa*, 3. 20. 1; *Nāṭaka-lakṣaṇa-ratna-kośa*, 39; *Bhāvaprakāśana*, 7, GOS. ed., p. 188, l. 2 ff.

Bharata uses the term without explaining it fully. But his commentators have explained it, especially Abhinavagupta. Before him Śrī Śaṅkuka used the idea of imitation to explain the nature of art experience. He defined *rasa*, the substance and enjoyment of literary or dramatic art, as the 'imitation of emotion'.[4] Śaṅkuka's formulation, was however, met with severe opposition from Bhaṭṭa Tauta, the preceptor of Abhinavagupta in dramaturgy. Bhaṭṭa Tauta's criticism[5] is argumentative and dialectical; but it is based on the idea of *anukaraṇa* as it is commonly understood. *Anukaraṇa* or imitation means 'doing like, doing after, or following someone or something'. There is invariably some model; and a person who imitates or mimicks it in dress, appearance, manner and peculiarity of speaking, gestures and actions; he follows it accurately, and does everything like his model; this is not the original, but something done afterwards; and the similarity is so great that the imitator may be mistaken for the model. Imitation thus involves the element of mimicry and necessarily

4. Cf. Śaṅkuka's interpretation of the *rasa-sūtra* of Bharata, reproduced by Abhinava, NS. VI : ··· प्रतीयमानः स्थायी भावो मुख्यरामादिगत-स्थायि-अनुकरणरूपः । ··· तेन रतिरनुक्रियमाणा शृङ्गार इति ।

5. See, NS. VI, commentary of Abhinava on *rasa-sūtra*.

that of the original or the model which is imitated; it also includes the element of similarity or resemblance, because the mimic tries to look like and act like his model; and the success of the imitation depends on the degree of resemblance achieved. It is mainly on this ground that Bhaṭṭa Tauta rejects the idea of imitation. In the process of imitation the imitator and his audience both are familiar with the original model which is imitated; without such familiarity or knowledge the essence of the imitation cannot be apprehended at all. Art fails to be an imitation, according to Bhaṭṭa Tauta, precisely in this area of knowledge or established familiarity. Neither the literary artist, nor the actor who plays a particular dramatic role, or none of the readers or spectators could ever have seen the original mythical or legendary characters, or the imaginatively created characters, whose actions, emotions and thoughts are represented in literature and 'acted' in a dramatic spectacle. In the absence, therefore, of the original model and any knowledge about it, what could a literary creation or a dramatic representation be an imitation of, and in what sense could one say that the art presentation is like the original model? Further, mere similarity is no ground for the idea of imitation; twins, for example, resemble each other to the extent of being mistaken as identical; but

one does not say that one 'imitates' the other. And if 'doing after' or 'following' is the idea in imitation, the successive actions of any normal person will have to be regarded as imitation of what he did before. Bhaṭṭa Tauta's criticism appears to be too sweeping and critical; but it serves to show that the usual meaning of 'imitation' is irrelevant in the context of art.

It is necessary to visualise the process of art creation in order to get at the meaning of 'imitation'. Art is not reproducing, photographing, duplicating or mimicking men and women in life, their actions and emotions. A literary artist aims at conveying an experience of life. He conceives it as a literary theme and develops it as a plot or story. This, as we know, consists of events and situations, in which some characters are placed; they act, speak, go through different feelings and reactions. This is the kind of *construction* a writer uses in order to give a concrete and convincing shape to the experience he intends to convey. These elements of construction, namely, the events and situations, characters, their actions and emotions, are picked up from life, from the knowledge of life the writer has. A creative artist, thus, draws on life or on legendary, historical sources or on his imagination; and in order to create his characters, situations, actions, thoughts

and emotions, he has to be close to life and to reality or probability. This is both natural and necessary, because otherwise the artist's presentation of an experience will not carry conviction to his readers or spectators. The events and situations, characters, their actions and emotions, thus, look very much like what they are, or ought to be, in real life. And yet it is not 'imitation', for the simple reason that the artist rarely follows a single particular model (unless in historical writing, where existing records supply the necessary details). In creating a character, for example, an artist may borrow his features from one, temperament from another, actions and emotions from a third model. And similarly, in creating a situation or an event the place or the happening may have a counterpart in real life; but the other details may be of the artist's own construction. In other words, a construction of an experience in literature, however life-like it may appear to be, is a fusion of several elements drawn from totally unrelated aspects of life, or imaginatively created. As such it is a new 'construction', and not a simple 'imitation'. Abhinavagupta, therefore, says that it is a mistake to imagine that *anukaraṇa* in art has the simple sense of imitation. It is not mimicking, duplicating or reproducing something that already exists in real life, and which can serve as a model for copying

or imitating. The art creation is a *new construction* made from several different bits drawn from life by the creative artist from his own personal experience of life or from the experience of others which the artist has studied and assimilated for his own purpose. Likewise when a skilful actor plays a dramatic role and represents a dramatist's composition through the mode of histrionics, the movements, gestures and facial expressions, and physical and mental states that he 'acts', are all rooted in life and bear a convincing likeness to what a human being would do and feel in similar contexts of real life. The actor draws on his own experiences of life and receives training from his director to 'act' his part. The imitation is confined to its semblance to what happens familiarly in real life; and, once again, there is no one definite model that is followed, except perhaps an ideal image. So, an actor too creates, in his own way, a character or a happening and makes it come alive from the words of the dramatist by using the technique of *abhinaya*. *Anukaraṇa* in art, therefore, is a new construction from the elements of life, *a creation by re-creation.*[6] It is in this sense

6. See Abhinava's commentary on NS. I. 107 : ··· नाट्ये तु ··· रामरावणादिविषय-अध्यवसाये तत्संस्कार-अनुवृत्तिकारणभूत-

(*Continued on the next page*)

that Bharata speaks of *nāṭya*, and the literary art of creating experience, as an 'imitation'.

(3)

Bharata's characterization of *nāṭya* as *bhāvānukīrtana*, description or representation of emotional experience, is equally vital to the concept of literary and dramatic art. If what happens in life and to all kinds of people in the world were simply presented in words, however realistically and accurately, it would only be news, information, history, knowledge or thoughtful reflection; it is not likely to evoke the emotional response expected from an art presentation. The role of a creative artist is not that of a reporter, narrator, historian

(*Continued from the last page*)

तत्सहचरहृद्यवस्तुभूत-गीत-आतोद्य-प्रमदानुभव-संस्कारसूचित-समनुगत-तदुक्तरूप-रामाध्यवसाय-संस्कार एव ··· स्वात्मद्वारेण विश्वं तथा पश्यन् प्रत्येकं सामाजिको देशकालविशेषण-अपरामर्शेन एवंकारिणामिदमिति लिङ्गात्मकविधिसमर्पितं संविज्जातीयमेव ··· संस्काररसानुभववशेन ··· भजन् ··· शुभमाचरति अशुभं समुज्झति । इदानीम् उपायसंवेदना-लाभात् तदिदम् अनुकीर्तनम् अनुव्यवसायविशेषो नाट्यापरपर्यायः । नानुकार इति भ्रमितव्यम् । ··· तस्माद् अनुव्यवसायात्मकं कीर्तनं रूषितविकल्पसंवेदनं नाट्यम् । तद्वेदनवेद्यत्वात् । न तु अनुकरणरूपम् । यदि तु एवं मुख्यलौकिककरण-अनुसारितया अनुकरणमिति उच्यते तत्र कश्चिद् दोषः । स्थिते वस्तुतो भेदे शब्दप्रवृत्तेः अविवादास्पदत्वात् ।

or a philosopher. Literary theorists, therefore, distinguish literary writing from other kinds of writing.[7] Scientific and dogmatic kind of writing aims at conveying truth in the particular branch of knowledge in the most precise manner and with correct use of words which cannot be substituted. The effect of this kind of writing is commanding, like the words of authority. Another kind of writing which uses historical anecdotes or legendary narratives purports to convey some wholesome advice for the proper conduct of life. Here words can be replaced by alternative phrases as long as the purport remains unaltered. Writing of this kind is a communication, words of guidance as from a friend. Literary art is different from both these dogmatic and purposive kinds of writing. It intends only to convey an experience of life, and it uses word and sense as instruments to suggest it. The experience is bound with the emotional life of humanity (*bhāva*) and the material details are only constructive elements used for revealing it. This emotional content distinguishes literary art

7. See, for example, Mammaṭa, *Kāvyaprakāśa*, *vṛtti* on I. 2 : ... प्रभुसंमितशब्दप्रधानवेदादिशास्त्रेभ्यः सुहृत्संमित-अर्थतात्पर्यवत्-पुराणादीतिहासेभ्यश्च, शब्दार्थयोर्गुणभावेन रसाङ्गभूतव्यापारप्रवणतया विलक्षणं यत् काव्यं, लोकोत्तरवर्णनानिपुणकविकर्म, तत् कान्तेव सरसतापादनेन अभिमुखीकृत्य ... उपदेशं च ... करोति ... ।

from other writings. It is concerned with revealing and opening the possibility of sharing an emotional experience. Further, this sharing brings us an awareness and also gives us pleasure and delight, because the experience has been brought to us through the beauty of art. The effect of such writing is principally pleasure; and if in addition it yields advice, guidance or philosophy, it is only indirect, like the persuasive words of a charming beloved.

The nature of art presentation can thus be understood without much difficulty. But to make it still more clear, let us say an artist intends to bring to us the emotional experience of fear: He will not obviously state merely that some one experienced fear, or write an essay on the nature and effect of fear, or offer philosophical musings on the subject of fear. Instead, he will present a subject that has had the particular experience, a human being or a timid animal like a deer. He will place it in a particular situation which is calculated to arouse fear. He will describe the main cause of fear and, if he wants, environmental factors which are likely to stimulate and strengthen the feeling of fear. He will also describe the reactions of the subject to the impact of fear, the physical reactions as well as the mental states through which the subject goes during the

experience of fear, like the imminent sense of danger, doubt, temporary relief or fatigue. With these elements, which are of the artist's construction, a reader or spectator would be able to experience the emotion, as the subject did. This is the way an artist constructs or re-creates an experience for us. And it is precisely what Bharata formulated in his famous *rasa-sūtra*: The *vibhāva*, in Bharata's formulation, is the cause, stimulant or determinant which produces a particular emotion in the subject; the *anubhāvas* are the consequences or physical reactions to the stimulation of the emotion; and the *vyabhicāri-bhāvas* are the passing mental states through which a subject goes during the experience of the emotion. These components or ingredients, Bharata says, create *rasa*: In the context of a literary creation *rasa* is the emotional content, which the elements of construction intermingle and combine to produce. It is the reason why in high poetic theory *rasa* is regarded as the essence of literary and dramatic art; for, conveying an intense emotional experience is the principal concern of literature, the other factors of beauty of writing being incidental and additional sources of pleasure. In view of the impact of art presentation on a reader or spectator, *rasa* is relish. The art presentation evokes from us an appropriate emotional response; we are charmed to taste it,

relish it; and we derive an indescribable pleasure from the relish, not only because the experience has been brought to us with all the beauty of art but also because, as it is a creation, it is free from the usual demands of life and the operation of causal laws that govern life. The readers and spectators can, therefore, taste the art experience, relish it, enjoy it. This is *rasa*, the relish and enjoyment of art.

The picture of literary creation that emerges may be described as follows: A literary artist is not a historian who records the happenings in life in all their accurate details. Nor is he a reporter to whom fidelity to observed facts will bring credit. Nor again is he an intellectual thinker expressing his ideas on life. A literary artist is interested in revealing some emotional truth about life; and for this purpose he constructs a convincing experience. He uses situations, characters, their actions and reactions to construct an experience of emotion. These elements, quite attractive in themselves as literary creations in the hands of a skilful artist, are really 'material counterparts' or 'objective correlates' of an experience;[8] and they are used to reveal some emotion or a reaction to an emotion. This is the stuff of which literary art is made.

8. The phrase is used by T. S. Eliot.

Bharata would appear to be quite correct, therefore, in describing *bhāva* as the essence of literary and dramatic art, and in stating *bhāvānukīrtana* as the function of *nāṭya*.

Further, in real life some experiences only are pleasant and enjoyable. But in art every experience, even of sorrow, fear or disgust, becomes relishable. This is *rasa,* the emotional content of literary and dramatic art and its emotional impact on us as an experience worthy of enjoyment. If, therefore, the Sanskrit literary writing and the art of dramatic representation appear to lean towards *bhāva*-delineation and *rasa*-enjoyment, the theoretical basis for the preference is to be found in this conception of art experience.

(4)

Anukaraṇa or imitative reconstruction of an experience which is an aspect of life, and *bhāvānukīrtana* or presentation of emotion-charged content of experience, are characteristics which all literary forms must share alike. What makes drama a distinct art form is its special mode of communication to the audience. The dramatic art reaches us through *abhinaya* or histrionic

representation. In a literary composition the material counterparts of the experience like the characters, situations, speeches, physical and mental states (*vibhāva*, *anubhāva* and *vyabhicāri-bhāvas* of Bharata) can be revealed only through the word of the writer and the sense it conveys. In a dramatic presentation, on the other hand, there is the advantage that these components can be concretely and visually presented. For instance, an actor playing a particular dramatic role can use appropriate make-up, costume and accoutrement to create a credible image of the character he is playing. He can also speak the words written for him with correct voice-intonation and pitch to reveal the sense and the emotion behind them. He can go through various motions, assume poses and facial expressions to convey the thoughts, actions and feelings of the character, 'acting' them or rendering them through the modes of *abhinaya*. Thus, an actor can create for us, on a theatre stage, a live piece of experience for the time being. In the same way, a happening, a situation or an environment may be 're-constructed' on a stage by the use of suggestive drapery, curtains, painted scenery, stage props and property, and enhanced by special effects of stage arrangement, use of light and music. Such visual and aural aids as a theatric performance is in a position to provide

and utilize make the presented experience concrete, tangible and palpable to the spectator; he is able to grasp and accept the experience using many of his senses of perception. The spoken word, it will be seen, is only one of the means of representation (*vācika abhinaya*) in a dramatic performance; the actor can use his body and mind, in addition, to render the physical and mental states; and the director of the show can use other visual and aural aids to carry the total experience to (*abhi* + *nī*) the audience in more tangible and impressive way. This is an aspect of communication which is peculiar and exclusive to dramatic art.

So, Bharata fills yet another detail in his conception of *nāṭya* and says,

> (d) 'The entire nature of the people in the world (*lokasya svabhāvaḥ*) and their emotional states (*sva-bhāvaḥ*) as connected with the experiences of happiness and misery or joy and sorrow (*sukha-duḥkha-samanvitaḥ*), when presented through the technical medium of histrionic representation (*aṅgādi-abhinaya*), is to be called *nāṭya*.'[9]

9. NS. I. 119 : योऽयं स्वभावो लोकस्य सुखदुःखसमन्वितः ।
सोऽङ्गाद्यभिनयोपेतो नाट्यमित्यभिधीयते ॥

This *abhinaya*, as we learn from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata, is of four kinds. *Vācika* consists of voice-intonation, pitch, and is concerned with the delivery of dramatic speeches. *Āṅgika* comprises movements of the body, hands and feet, eyes and eyebrows, head and neck, and the gestures and the poses of the body and the limbs. *Āhārya* and *Nepathyaja* include make-up, costumes, jewelry, ornaments and garlands, weapons, head-dress or mask and other accessories; another part is connected with stage props and property. *Sāttvika abhinaya* is a psycho-physical or psycho-somatic representation where the body and mind of the actor are in perfect concentration and harmony, so that the emotionat content is revealed through psychological expression and is, at the same time, matched by physical reaction appropriate to the mental state. Bharata seems to lay particular emphasis on the *sāttvika abhinaya* as the most efficient mode of drama to carry the dramatist's intent to the audience. The dramatic script often provides directions for the kind of *abhinaya* required; and *abhinaya* remains the exclusive mode of dramatic representation. The elaborate instructions and directions on *abhinaya* given in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* indicate without doubt that Bharata looks upon drama as principally a performing art.

(5)

In describing different patterns of dramatic writing Bharata uses the term '*rūpaka*'.[10] A later writer, Dhanañjaya, author of *Daśarūpaka*, explains the term. The explanation sheds some additional light on the conception of *nāṭya*. *Rūpa* is what is perceived visually like, for example, a dramatic spectacle. *Rūpaka* is, in the language of rhetorics, a metaphor, which involves super-imposition of one thing or idea on another and implies a figurative non-difference between the two.[11] In an expression like *mukha-candra* the notion of 'moon' is super-imposed on a woman's 'face'; the two are deliberately identified for suggesting the moon-like loveliness of the face. Such super-imposition and temporary identification are present in *nāṭya* too. The dramatic composition through which a dramatist creates the characters, situations, actions and emotions is a kind of superimposition, because the word of the writer is taken to stand for them all. More obviously, as an actor simulates a

10. NS. Chapter XVIII is termed दशरूपनिरूपणम् ।

11. *Daśrūpaka* I. 7 : अवस्थानुकृतिर्नाट्यं रूपं दृश्यतयोच्यते ।
रूपकं तत्समारोपात् ··· ··· ॥
See the commentary *Avaloka* on this. Also, *Bhāvaprakāśana*, 7, GOS ed. p. 188, ll. 4–5.

dramatic character, identifies himself, as far as possible, with the character he is playing, with his actions and feelings, it is a super-imposition and a temporary identification. The spectators are willing to take the actor as a particular dramatic character, during the dramatic performance, although they may be perfectly aware of the natural and private individuality of the actor. The spectators, thus, superimpose the image and personality of a dramatic character, say Rāma, on the actor, as the actor has in his own turn superimposed himself on the original character. The appropriate make-up, costume, dramatic speeches, acted movements and feelings, the atmosphere of theatre, and entertaining devices like music, all help to suppress the private individuality of the actor, and the spectator identifies him with the character he is playing. Such a process of super-imposition is extended to other aspects of theatric presentation as well. So, the mere descriptive word of the dramatist or some symbolic or suggestive stage props or property that may be used, suffice to produce the illusion that a particular happening is taking place in heaven or on earth, in a harem apartment or on the bettlefield, on a mountain or in a *pramadavana*; during daytime or on a moonlit night, in spring or a rainy day. When, again, an actor shows anger, sorrow or joy, the spectator is prepared to

accept the moods and feelings as genuine expressions of particular mental states. As a matter of fact, the entire experience revealed on a theatre stage is a presentation of theatric art. And yet the spectators are willing to take it as real experience and respond to it. Though it is 'make-belief', it is an essential aspect of art presentation. The term *rūpaka*, implying super-imposition and purposeful identification, connotes the nature of art presentation and the audience-response to it.

Thus, the term *rūpa* as applied to drama indicates the visual and spectacular aspect of the presentation; and *rūpaka* implies the art form which carries the dramatist's meaning to the audience through the process of super-imposition and identification. In Bharata's theory the term *rūpaka* is preferred as an equivalent of drama, and not the current, popular term *nāṭaka*. For Bharata *nāṭaka* is one of the ten dramatic patterns of composition he has described, although *nāṭaka* and *prakaraṇa* represent the model patterns from which others are derived.

(6)

The term *nāṭya* is grammatically connected with the root *naṭ*, which denotes 'movement of limbs'.

Semantically, or rather in practice, and in the view of some later theorists on drama, *nāṭya* is associated with *nartana*,[12] that is to say, with the root *nṛt*.

An actor shows movements of limbs, while the body remains steady (*avaspandana*), by means of gestures and facial expressions. Such combined and harmonised display of physical movement and mental states is technically called *sāttvika abhinaya*. It is regarded as of supreme importance in *nāṭya*; and an actor who is an exponent of such *abhinaya* is accordingly called *naṭa*.[13]

The concepts *nāṭya*, *nṛtya* and *nṛtta* seem to have one thing in common, namely, *gātravikṣepa* or movement of limbs. But they are different as forms of art, according to the author of *Daśarūpaka*.[14] *Nṛtya* is based on *bhāva*. It is intended to reveal a particular emotional state. For

12. Cf. *Saṅgīta-ratnākara*, 7. 18 : नर्तनं नाट्यमित्युक्तं स त्वत्राभिनयो भवेत् ।

13. See *Avaloka* on *Daśarūpaka* I. 7 : नाट्यमिति च 'नट अवस्पन्दने' इति नटेः किञ्चित् चलनार्थत्वात् सात्त्विकबाहुल्यम्, अत एव तत्कारिषु 'नट'व्यपदेशः ।

14. *Ibid.* यथा च गात्रविक्षेपार्थत्वे समानेऽपि, अनुकारात्मकत्वेन नृत्ताद् अन्यन् नृत्यं तथा वाक्यार्थाभिनयात्मकात् नाट्यात् पदार्थाभिनयात्मकम् अन्यदेव नृत्यम् इति ।

this purpose *nṛtya* uses the mode of *abhinaya*; but it is restricted to the representation of a mental state or an idea. It is equivalent to expressing the meaning of a word, a phrase, a verse; and so it is called *padārtha-abhinaya*. The *abhinaya* used in *nṛtya* is *āṅgika* and *sāttvika* only. As contrasted with *nṛtya*, *nāṭya* uses all the four kinds of *abhinaya*, and is equivalent to expressing the meaning of a whole sentence, a complete text, *vākyābhinaya*; for, *nāṭya* is supposed to carry the total meaning of a dramatic composition to the audience. In this process *nāṭya* has the scope to develop an emotional state fully and the dramatic content into full flavour of aesthetic enjoyment or *rasa*. The *nṛtya*, on the other hand, is confined to *bhāva* and its rendering. Further, *nṛtya* requires no dialogue script; the emotional state is presented by mimetic acting; as such, *nṛtya* remains a visual art. *Nāṭya* or *rūpaka* is both *śravya* and *dṛśya*.

Nṛtta, Dhanañjaya states, is founded on musical tempo (*laya*). It uses some limb-movement (*aṅga-vikṣepa*) to mark the musical rhythm with foot; but the hand gestures are used only as an ornamental and graceful feature. The essential concern of *nṛtta* is with foot-movements which must synchronise perfectly with the musical rhythm and tempo. There is no rendering of emotion in *nṛtta*, only synchronised harmony of dance-steps and the

musical time-pattern. As a popular illustration, *Bharata-nāṭyam* is a *nṛtya* form and *Kathaka* is a *nṛtta* form. Dhanañjaya would, therefore, connect the terms *nṛtya* and *nṛtta* with the root √*nṛt*, and call the exponent of this art form a *nartaka* or dancer, as distinguished from *naṭa* or actor who is the exponent of the art of drama.[15]

Commenting on the dramatic pattern *nāṭaka* Rāmacandra and Guṇacandra, the joint authors of *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, trace the word '*nāṭaka*' to the root √*ṇaṭ-nṛt*, belonging to the *Bhvādi*-group. Bhaṭṭoji Dīkṣita explains in his *Siddhānta-kaumudī* that the *Bhvādi*-group consists of two lists of roots, the first comprising 310 and the second 781 roots. In the first citation the sense is of *nāṭya*, which is histrionic representation of a whole dramatic text, and the exponent of this art is thereby called '*naṭa*'. In the second citation the sense is *nṛtya*, which is the *abhinaya* of a mental state or an idea, and the performing artist is thereby called '*nartaka*'.[16]

15. *Daśarūpaka*, I. 9 : अन्यद् भावाश्रयं नृत्यं, नृत्तं ताललयाश्रयम् ।
आद्यं पदार्थाभिनयो मार्गो, देशी तथा परम् ॥
See *Avaloka* on this. Also, my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, Notes, pp. 162–164.

16. *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, I. 5. prose *vṛtti*.
'णट नृतौ' (भ्वादिगण, ३१०, ७८१). On the second citation

(*Continued on the next page*)

The association of 'acting' and 'dancing' appears to suggest the use of *abhinaya* in *nṛtya*, as of dance modes in a dramatic performance. It must be remembered that *nāṭya* can use *nṛtya* technique at least for certain aspects of dramatic representation, apart from a drama which may be constructed and presented as a dance-drama. The authors of *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* derive the term *nāṭaka*, as representative of a type of dramatic composition, in a figurative sense, utilizing the twofold sense of the root, and state that, '*nāṭaka* is so called because it makes the heart of the audience *dance* by introducing several pleasing and entertaining modes of presentation.[17] A near connection between *naṭana-nartana*, and the view of *abhinaya* as the principal mode of their presentation, are naturally implied in these grammatical-semantic explanations.

(*Continued from the last page*)

Bhaṭṭoji writes : इदमेव पूर्वमपि पठितम् (भ्वादिगण ३१०) । तत्र अयं विवेकः । पूर्वपठितस्य नाटयमर्थः । यत्कारिषु नटव्यपदेशः । वाक्यार्थाभिनयो नाटयम् । घटादौ तु नृत्तं नृत्यं चार्थः । यत्कारिषु नर्तकव्यपदेशः । पदार्थाभिनयो नृत्यम् । गात्रविक्षेपमात्रं तु नृत्तम् । Hindi Notes by the editors, p. 23, *Hindi Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, Delhi University, Delhi, 1961. See my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, Notes p. 238.

17. *Nāṭyadarpaṇa* I. 5. prose *vṛtti* : नाटकमिति नाटयति विचित्रं रञ्जनाप्रवेशेन सभ्यानां हृदयं नर्तयति इति नाटकम् ।

(7)

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* conveys an unmistakable impression that *nāṭya* is a matter of stage production and the employment of *abhinaya* of different kinds. It has been observed earlier that Bharata looks upon drama principally as a performing art. Yet it need not be supposed that the literary aspect of drama has been neglected in Sanskrit theory. The *śravya* aspect of a dramatic performance, in the preliminary stages, is likely to have been confined mostly to song and music, and perhaps some improvised exclamations and utterances. The description of the first performance of *Tripuradāha* and *Amṛtamanthana* in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*[18] obviously suggests that the early performances were shows of mimetic acting presented with song, dance and music. But it also appears that drama soon developed *pāṭhya*, which in cource of time would be the business of a playwright to provide in the form of dramatic script and dialogue. In later theory drama is described as a *dṛśya-kāvya*. The use of the term *kāvya* evidently shows that drama is not merely a piece of theatric production; it is also to be treated as a literary composition.

18. NS. IV. 2-10.

In the context of *vācika abhinaya* Bharata makes the statement that speech is the 'body' of dramatic art, and that the entire *abhinaya* mode is only a means to convey the meaning of dramatist's words.[19] Abhinavagupta points out that this direction is intended for the playwright when he undertakes the composition of a play, and also for the actor when he has to 'act' it. In fact, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* gives elaborate rules and directions for the structure and composition of drama, the language and metres to be used, and the styles and modes suitable for different emotional presentations.

It is again in the context of *vācika abhinaya* that Bharata developes his ideas on the literary aspect of drama. He writes :[20]

> 'A drama which uses soft and graceful words and meanings, avoiding obscure

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19. NS. XIV. 2–3 : वाचि यत्नस्तु कर्तव्यो नाट्यस्यैषा तनुः स्मृता ।
अङ्गनैपथ्यसत्त्वानि वाक्यार्थं व्यञ्जयन्ति हि ॥
वाङ्मयानीह शास्त्राणि वाङ्निष्ठानि तथैव च ।
तस्माद् वाचः परं नास्ति वाग् हि सर्वस्य कारणम् ॥
Abhinava comments : 'वाचि यत्नस्तु कर्तव्यः' इति कविना निर्माणकाले, नटेन प्रयोगकाले ।'

20. NS. XVI. 128 : मृदुललितपदार्थं गूढशब्दार्थहीनं
जनपदसुखभोग्यं युक्तिमन् नृत्ययोज्यम् ।
बहुकृतरसमार्गं सन्धिसन्धानयुक्तं
भवति जगति योग्यं नाटकं प्रेक्षकाणाम् ॥

> words and senses, such as could be easily enjoyed by people from small towns and villages (*janapada*), which contains clever and convincing dialogues that could be adapted to dance-movements, which opens a path for (the portrayal of) varied sentiments of many characters, which is constructed with proper knitting of the various junctures in plot-development: such a drama is very suitable in this world for the spectators.'

In another context Bharata states what he expects *nāṭya* to show to the audience, and says that it will present[21] —

> 'piety, sport, wealth, peace of mind, laughter, fighting, sexual passion, slaughter, the pious behaviour of the righteous, the passion of those who love pleasure, the

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21. NS. I. 108–111 :

क्वचिद्धर्मः क्वचित् क्रीडा क्वचिद् अर्थः क्वचिच् शमः ।
क्वचिद् हास्यं क्वचिद् युद्धं क्वचित् कामः क्वचिद् वधः ॥
धर्मो धर्मप्रवृत्तानां कामः कामोपसेविनाम् ।
निग्रहो दुर्विनीतानां विनीतानां दमक्रिया ॥
क्लीबानां धाष्टर्यजननम् उत्साहः शूरमानिनाम् ।
अबुधानां विबोधश्च वैदुष्यं विदुषामपि ॥

> repression of the wicked, the restraint of the disciplined.... '

Bharata also expects that *nāṭya* in its spectacular performance will give

> ' boldness to the timid, enthusiasm to the brave, knowledge to the ignorant and wisdom to the learned, graceful pleasures to the affluent and powerful, steady comfort to the miserable, prospects of wealth to those who live by money and courage to the despondent.... '

How could these expectations be fulfilled if *nāṭya* were a mere article of theatrical art and a production of skilled *abhinaya*? It is obvious, therefore, that Bharata expects the presentation of several things in *nāṭya* and its varied, uplifting impact on different kinds of spectators in virtue of the dramatic and poetic content a playwright will creatively provide for it. It is only the poet's creative art that can encompass these objectives; otherwise *nāṭya* will be a mere performing art, a stylised and technical piece of acting. It is in this regard that drama establishes its value as elegant and ennobling literature.

(8)

The Sanskrit-oriented concept of *nāṭya* as a representation of emotional experience through the mode of fourfold *abhinaya* may appear to be totally different from the Western concept of drama as essentially a confrontation, a presentation of 'conflict'. But it is not correct to assume that Sanskrit drama ignores conflict or confrontation. The element of conflict comes in Sanskrit dramatic theory in the discussion of *vastu* or the story and plot of the play. The dramatic story is conceived as a sustained effort on the part of a hero, or his helpmates acting on his behalf, to achieve a certain definite goal,[22] like winning a kingdom, vanquishing an adversary or obtaining the willing love of a beautiful maiden. The effort proceeds through the natural stages (*avasthā*) of beginning, actual effort

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22. Cf. NS. XIX. 3 ff.

कारणात् फलयोगस्य वृत्तं स्याद् आधिकारिकम् ।
तस्योपकरणार्थं तु कीर्त्यते ह्यानुषङ्गिकम् ॥ ४
कवेः प्रयत्नात् नेतॄणां युक्तानां विध्युपाश्रयात् ।
कल्प्यते हि फलप्राप्तिः समुत्कर्षात् फलस्य च ॥ ५
संसाध्ये फलयोगे तु व्यापारः कारणस्य यः ।
तस्यानुपूर्व्या विज्ञेया पञ्चावस्थाः प्रयोक्तृभिः ॥ ७
प्रारम्भश्च प्रयत्नश्च तथा प्राप्तेश्च सम्भवः ।
नियता च फलप्राप्तिः फलयोगश्च पञ्चमः ॥ ८

in operation, partial hope of success and frustration due to existing impediments, certainty of hope by the overcoming of obstacles, and the final obtainment of the desired fruit. It is in this dramatic action, particularly in confronting and counteracting the obstacles, that the element of 'conflict' is invariably present. The obstacles may start popping up from the beginning of the action and may continue till almost the last stage of completion of the action. A story presented through the medium of literary art is not a smooth, uninterrupted and uneventful journey towards the expected destination; if it were so, it will hold no interest for a reader or spectator. So, a literary presentation can hardly be imagined without some kind of conflict, a clash of personalities or events, an opposition of ideas or ideologies.

It appears, therefore, that the difference between the two concepts is due to difference in emphasis. The Western drama regards 'conflict' as the essence of drama; the Sanskrit-oriented view, without ignoring the element of conflict, seems to see drama even in the presentation of intense emotions and their rendering by the modes of histrionics.

In this view, however, response to emotional presentation and enjoying the flavour of emotional

experience, technically called *rasa*, is held as the aim and objective of literary and dramatic art. The other impacts, like solace, elevation, hope and encouragement, advice and philosophy of life and others, which may arise out of a art presentation are regarded as incidental effects, pleasure and delight being the primary objective of art impact.

In an anecdote presented in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* it is said that the Creator-god Brahmā created *nāṭyaveda* to fulfil a demand for a *kriḍanīyaka*,[23] a plaything, a source of diversion and entertainment, which could be available to all kinds of people without restrictions of caste or creed, sex or age. The orientation given here towards entertainment and pleasure has, no doubt, shaped Sanskrit drama both in its composition as a literary piece as well as in its presentation as an article of theatre art. On the literary side, the Sanskrit drama showed all emotions including intense sorrow, fear or disgust; but it avoided the formal pattern of a tragedy of the Western type which ends in death of the principal character. This is one of the reasons[24] why Sanskrit drama has no formal tragedy and

23. See NS. I. 8-12.

24. For fuller discussion see my *Tragedy and Sanskrit Drama*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1974.

always strives to end on a note of fulfilment and happiness. On the presentational side, the Sanskrit drama adopted song, dance and music, as an accompaniment, and used dance modes in certain aspects of dramatic presentation as a means of grace and for pleasure.

* * *

2

BHARATA'S THEATRE AND STAGE

1. *Three kinds of theatre-construction; Measurements.*
2. ***Rectilinear Theatre : most convenient and suitable; Details :***
   - (*a*) *Floor plan, Area Division, Auditorium, Stage, Green-room;*
   - (*b*) *Doors;*
   - (*c*) *Special Details :*
     - (*i*) *Raṅgaśīrṣa and Raṅgapīṭha*
     - (*ii*) *Mattavāraṇī*
     - (*iii*) *Dvi-bhūmi Nāṭyamaṇḍapa*
     - (*iv*) *Seating arrangement.*
3. *Constructional variations in Theatre-types.*
4. ***Building and Decoration : Pillars, walls, ceiling, windows and ventilation; Finishing.***
5. ***Curtains : Yavanikā; Paṭa-Paṭī; Apaṭī.***
6. *Later Developments.*

(1)

Bharata describes in *Nāṭyaśāstra*, *Adhyāya* 2, three types of theatre constructions. They are : (a) *Vikṛṣṭa*, *Āyata* or Rectilinear; (b) *Caturasra* or Square; and (c) *Tryasra* or Triangular.

The floor area for the theatres is measured either in terms of *hasta* which is 24 *aṅgulas*, or *daṇḍa* which measures 4 *hastas*. The area measurements for the three types are 108 *hastas* or *daṇḍas* for a large theatre, 64 for a middling size, and 32 for a small one. But Bharata prefers, on the whole, the plan for a theatre of middling size, and for obvious reasons. In a very large theatre the spectators, particularly in the last rows of seats, will be too far away from the stage; they will not be able to see the facial expressions of actors indicating different emotions. The spoken dialogue also will not be heard distinctly and clearly in the back portion of the auditorium, as the sound of words and of music may not be carried to far distance. The entire dramatic spectacle may, therefore, fail to be distinctly visible and audible, and lose its appeal to the audience.[1] Bharata speaks, therefore, with approval of middling sized theatre construction in *hasta* measure, and describes the *Āyata* or

1. NS. II. 17–21.

Rectangular type in full details, which would serve as a frame-work for other types with necessary variations.

(2)

(a) The floor area of the *Āyata* or *Vikṛṣṭa* type of theatre admeasures 64 *hastas* by 32 *hastas*, and it is to be so built that the main entrance faces east, which is an auspicious quarter; with this arrangement the stage and the actors during the performance will be facing east. From the total rectangular area 64 × 32, the square on the eastern side 32 × 32 is intended as the *prekṣāgṛha* or auditorium where seats for spectators are provided. The adjoining square of 32 × 32 towards the west is divided into two equal portions. The rectangular portion 16 × 32 near the auditorium represents the *stage* area proper; this is further marked into two equal portions by a drawn line; the portion 8 × 32 in front adjoining the auditorium is the front stage, and the next area of the same 8 × 32 measure is the back stage. The whole stage area (16 × 32) is raised, like a platform, 1 and 1/2 *hastas* from the floor level. The rectangular portion 16 × 32 that now remains towards the west, at the back of the stage area, is meant for the *nepathya-gṛha* or green

room, where the actors put on their make-up and costumes and wait for their stage appearance. The '*nepathye*' or 'behind the curtain' speeches in the drama are delivered from this green room. (See *Figure 1*)

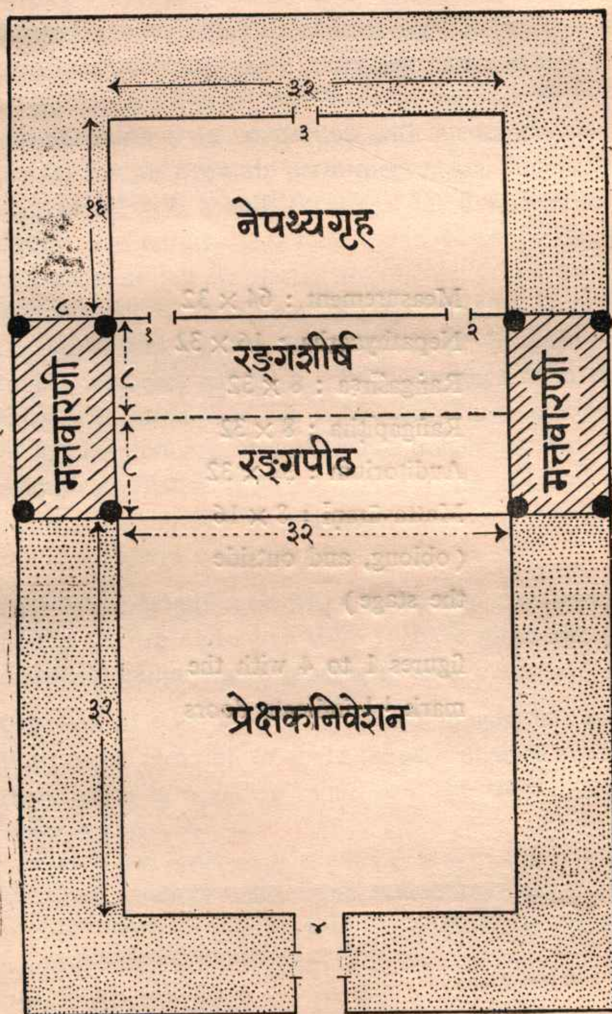
(b) Doors for the theatre are mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra*,[2] and Abhinavagupta locates them as follows: The main door is in the east, and is intended for the spectators to enter the theatre and the auditorium. Abhinava suggests that the *nepathyagṛha* was separated from the open stage by a brick-wall; and this is natural because the actors off the stage must be concealed from the view of audience. This necessitates two doors in the green room wall, which are mentioned in a different chapter in another context;[3] these two doors are intended for the entrance and exit of the actors from the green room to the stage and back. The fourth door is at the extreme back in the wall of the green room on the western side. This is a private entrance for the use of actors to enter the green room directly from the back of the theatre. Thus, the theatre conceived by Bharata has a minimum of four doors.

2. NS. II. 96-97. See Abhinava's commentary.
3. NS. XIII. 2 : ये नेपथ्यगृहद्वारे मया पूर्वं प्रकीर्तिते । तयोर्भाण्डस्य विन्यासः ... ॥

Figure 1

Rectilinear Theatre

(Floor plan)



विकृष्ट (आयत) नाट्यगृह

[Details on the reverse]

Measurement : 64 × 32
Nepathyagṛha : 16 × 32
Raṅgaśīrṣa : 8 × 32
Raṅgapīṭha : 8 × 32
Auditorium : 32 × 32
Mattavāraṇī : 8 × 16
(oblong, and outside
the stage)

figures 1 to 4 with the
mark | | indicate doors

Abhinavagupta refers to another opinion which mentions six doors[4] in a verse suspected to be interpolated. The context leads to suppose that this direction is in connection with an improvised pendal for an open-air performance, and not in connection with a built theatre. But if two more doors were constructed, they will have to be on the two sides of the stage area or of auditorium area. The first alternative provides stage entrance from the north and south sides of the stage, in addition to the west-east entrances. Such entrance from the sides is mentioned in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* as a matter of local practice in drama production.[5] In the second alternative the two doors on the sides of the auditorium will provide additional exits, as in modern theatre constructions.

(c) Some details regarding the internal construction of the theatre and stage seem to have given rise to different opinions and apparently look controversial.

(i) One of them is *raṅgaśīrṣa* and *raṅgapīṭha*, and the precise meaning of these terms. Bharata uses these terms in a rather vague way and they seem

4. Abhinava's comm. on II. 98 : अन्ये तु आद्यद्वार(द्वयमि)वाद्येन हेतुना अन्यद्वारद्वयं पार्श्वस्थितं कुर्याद् आलोकसिद्धयर्थम् इति षड्द्वारं नाटयगृहमाचक्षते । Cf. NS. XIII. 67 : द्वाराणि षट् चैव भवन्ति चात्र । रङ्गस्य दिग्भाण्डविनिश्चितानि ॥

5. Cf. NS. XIII. 52–54.

...6

to denote the stage generally. Dr. Manomohan Ghosh and Ācārya D. R. Mankad think that both the words denote the same thing, namely, the stage area. The measurements they assign to the stage and green room areas are also different, 16 × 32, and the auditorium is supposed to measure 48 × 32. This is clearly against the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text. It is a modern idea to provide larger space for the auditorium so as to accomodate several hundred spectators. Bharata's directions originate in a different context altogether. The built theatres were for private audience generally. It appears from literary references that such theatres, generally known as *saṅgītaśālā*, were built in royal palaces, or perhaps also in the mansions of rich patrons, where the accommodation was naturally restricted to the members of the royal family, the king's officers and the select invited guests. For public dramatic performances only the stage and green room must have been erected, and some seats for the honoured guests provided, the general public finding their own accommodation in the pendal according to their social status and rank. The arrangements for the performance of Vālmīki's play described in Bhavabhūti's *Uttara-rāma-carita* confirm this, and shed light on the nature of dramatic productions intended for the masses. It is not correct, therefore, to interpret Bharata's

ideas according to our present-day understanding. Concepts and designs of theatre construction have naturally changed with the passage of time and in accordance with altered conditions and public requirements. The directions Bharata provides are also not scientific precepts which cannot be changed. He is describing things suitable for his own times. Our academic obligation, I think, is to interpret the text correctly without losing the context of time; and in case of doubt it is advisable to rely on old commentators like Abhinavagupta than to venture modern interpretations; for, the basic question is of textual rectitude rather than that of specialized knowledge of engineering and architecture.

Dr Subba Rao[6] comes practically to the same conclusion that the two words denote the same thing; with this difference that *raṅgapīṭha*, according to him, means 'the (stage) area of production' and *raṅgaśīrṣa* the 'surface of the stage'. He bases this interpretation on the textual

6. Dr. Subba Rao's article on NS. II, theatre construction, is appended to NS. Vol. I, GOS, second revised edition, Baroda, 1956.

For other details, vide my bibliography called "Reading Material", appended to my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, Bhandarkar O. R. Institute, Pune.

statement that the stage should not be like the back of a fish or the back of a tortoise. But Bharata's statement[7] has a different background which has escaped the attention of the interpreter. Bharata directs that the block representing the stage should have a raised plinth of one and one-half *hastas*. This is done by building a brick-wall on the three (or four) sides; the entire pit or hollow is then to be filled with black soft earth;[8] and that is how a raised area will be built. It is likely that the earth will not be evenly spread and pressed, in which case the surface of the stage where the actors have to perform may not be even and smooth, but like the back of a fish, sloping on the sides, or like the back of a tortoise, completely uneven; hence, Bharata's direction.

From the text of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* it appears that out of the area of 16 × 32 which represents the stage, half the portion 8 × 32 towards the west, that is, adjoining the green room, is the *raṅgaśirṣa*. Abhinava points out that this is the 'inner place' of the stage as the actors in their character-roles enter the stage. Later we learn that this is the place where the musicians sit with their backs to

7. NS. II. 72 : एवंविधैः प्रकर्तव्यं रङ्गशीर्षं प्रयत्नतः। कूर्मपृष्ठं न कर्तव्यं मत्स्यपृष्ठं तथैव च ॥

8. NS. II. 69 : पूरणे मृत्तिका चात्र कृष्णा देया प्रयत्नतः।

the wall of the green room and facing the audience. It seems obvious, therefore, that *raṅgaśirṣa* denotes what we call *back stage*. Abhinava explains the term by observing that the playhouse may be likened to a person lying flat on his back; the back stage portion is where his head would rest; hence the name; the front stage is face.[9]

It follows that *raṅgapīṭha* would then denote the *front stage*, the area 8×32 adjacent to the auditorium. According to the text the *Brahma-maṇḍala* is located in the centre of the *raṅgapīṭha*.[10] This is the holy circle where the sūtradhāra is to offer worship and flowers; it is to be expected that this preliminary religious performance will be done in the front stage area before the audience.

9. Read Abhinava on NS. II. 33–35 : पृष्ठगतं भागं अर्धेन विभज्य अष्टहस्तं रङ्गशिरः । प्रविशतां पात्राणां चान्तःस्थानम् । नाट्यमण्डपस्य हि उत्तानसुप्तवद् अवस्थितस्य रङ्गपीठं मुख्यम् । तद् अष्टहस्तं शिरः । तत्पृष्ठे तु दैर्घ्याद् हि षोडषहस्तं नेपथ्यगृहं भवति । विस्तारात्तु द्वात्रिंशत्करमेव तत् । नैपथ्यादिकं च तत्र गृह्यते ।
   Cf. also Abhinava on II. 96–98, 100 : रङ्गपीठस्य यत् पृष्ठं रङ्गशिरः तत्र द्वितीयं (द्वारम्) ··· । रङ्गपीठस्य यद् उपरि शिरोरूपम् इत्यर्थः । तथा च विकृष्टमण्डपे रङ्गपीठापेक्षया रङ्गशिर उन्नतं वक्ष्यते ।

10. NS. I. 95; and V. 72 :

    रङ्गपीठस्य मध्ये तु स्वयं ब्रह्मा प्रतिष्ठितः ।
    इष्टयर्थं रङ्गमध्ये तु क्रियते पुष्पमोक्षणम् ॥ I. 95.

    Cf. also, Ch. V. Pūrvaraṅga, vv. 69–73.

These meanings are further corroborated by another direction from the text that 'the *raṅgapīṭha* is to be constructed with the correct procedure given in the *śāstra*, but the *raṅgaśīrṣa* is to be made with six pillars.[11] Dr. Subba Rao interprets this direction, to suit his meaning of *raṅgaśīrṣa*, to mean a frame-work of six poles put under the stage surface. This is again a modern way of looking at things and it is needless when we remember Bharata's direction to fill the stage pit with black earth. From Abhinava's observation[12] it appears that the six-pillared construction is added to the back stage as a piece of decoration and it also serves the purpose of a resting place for the actors and for concealing the characters before they make their stage appearance. This arrangement of six pillars can be made in three different ways. (See *Figure 2* and the four illustrations).

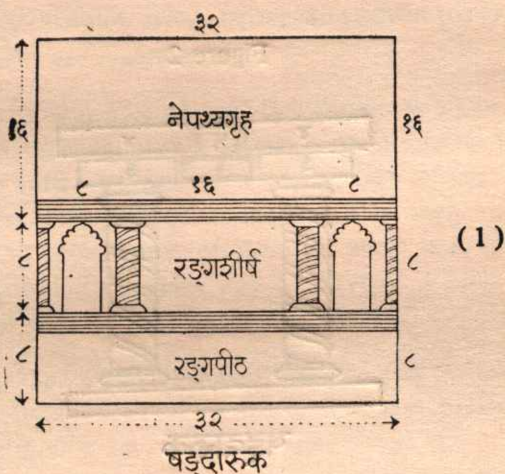
In the first two, 4 pillars are placed vertically against the *nepathyagṛha* wall, leaving some distance so as to enable a person to stand behind the pillar concealed from the view of the spectators; and 2 pillars are placed horizontally above and below the four pillars, thus forming a compact panel. The

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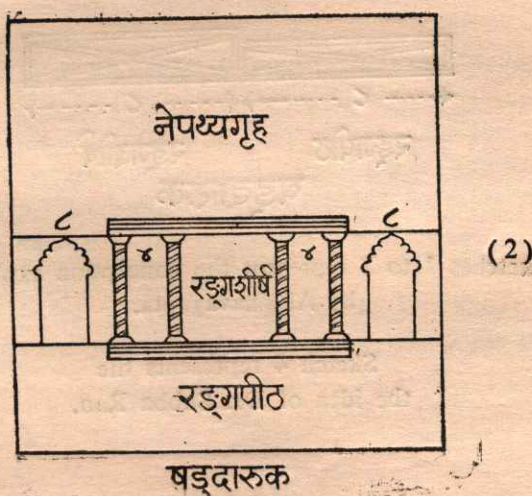
11. NS. II. 68.
12. तेन विचित्ररचनोपेतत्वं लभ्यते । तत् पात्राणां विश्रान्त्यै, आगच्छतां च गुप्त्यै, रङ्गस्य शोभायै रङ्गशिरः कार्यम् । Comm. on II. 68.

Figure 2

Raṅgaśirṣa : Six-pillared construction

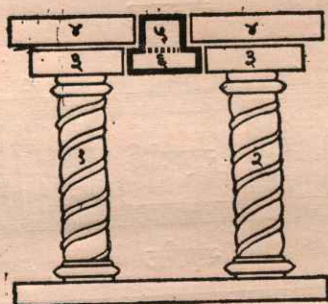


(1)

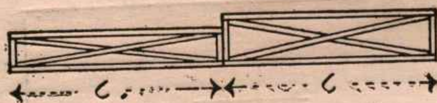


(2)

Figure 2



(3)



(4)

Sketches 1 to 3 represent the conception explained by Abhinavagupta.

Sketch 4 represents the the idea of Dr. Subba Rao.

third is a complex architectural construction looking like a decorative gate-way.

When it is remembered that the musicians sit in this area throughout the dramatic performance, and that the entire stage is open to the view of the spectators, it is possible to imagine that such a decorative construction of the back stage is intended for beautifying the stage and to serve as a kind of beautiful back-drop to the performance.

(ii) Another detail of special construction which appears doubtful is *mattavāraṇī*. The text prescribes its construction on the sides of the stage and provides some details of construction.[13] Scholars writing about the *mattavāraṇī* have assigned different meanings to the term:

Zarokā or window-like opening in the wall or ceiling (Dr. Shah and Sandesara);
a small wall or railing in front of the stage to prevent excited spectators from rushing on towards the stage (Prof. Bhanu; Godāvarī Ketkar takes the word similarly in the etymological sense and emends it to *mattavāriṇī*);
pendal raised for elephant fights (Dr. Divekar);
a decorative panel depicting a row of elephants in

13. Cf. NS. I. 90–91; II. 63–65, 99.

rut tied to a tether, and placed on the front plinth of the stage in view of the audience (Dr. Subba Rao).

None of the meanings suits the context and the possible stage construction suggested by the word. Grammatically, the correct form is *mattavāraṇa*; even as a *bahuvrīhi* compound the feminine form would be *mattavāraṇā*. The feminine form *vāraṇī* is due to *lyuṭ* suffix, according to Dr. Mirashi; Ācārya Viśveśvara says that the feminine form has been coined for finery; a feminine word looks nice. Any way, there is no connection with 'elephant' (*vāraṇa*).[14] The other meanings do not answer the constructional detail of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and the possible use of *mattavāraṇī* for stage and production purposes.

The *Śabdakalpadruma* explains *mattavāraṇa* to mean 'a verandah or extension of a groved path'. It is a kind of projection or extension beyond a wall or a structure; and in normal building it is apt to prevent the fall of an intoxicated or excited person. The word thus denotes a projection, an extension, corridor, a room marked off by a parapet or

14. See Ācārya Viśveśvara, *Hindi Abhinavabhāratī*, Delhi University, pp. 312–319;
Dr. Mirāshī, *Saṁshodhana Muktāvalī*, Vol. VI (Marathi).

pillars near a hall, an enclosure; the Sanskrit word *kakṣyā* comes close to the meaning intended. The literary references corroborate this meaning.[15] For example, *mattavāraṇī* referred to in the *Bālarāmāyaṇa* denotes the outer, projecting boards of a chariot; in the *Udayana-sundarī-kathā* a person is said to take a book as a pillow and rest in the *mattavāraṇī*, which indicates here an aisle adjoining a hall and marked off by pillars.

The *mattavāraṇī* is constructed with four pillars. Now the evidence from grammar, lexicon and literature, as well as Abhinava's explanation, clearly point out that *mattavāraṇī* denotes an area on the the two sides of the stage, either inside or outside the stage, as an extension, marked off by pillars and serving like a corridor, balcony or lobby.

Dr. Mirashi thinks that the *mattavāraṇī* served the same purpose as the *raṅgaśirṣa*, namely, as a resting place for the actors, for their temporary concealment from the spectators, and as a stage decoration. The decorative effect is certainly intended, as carved pillars are generally used in the construction of the theatre. But I cannot accept the other uses. There is no necessity for a duplicate arrangement for rest and concealment of

15. See Dr. Mirashi's article on *Mattavāraṇī*, *Ibid.*

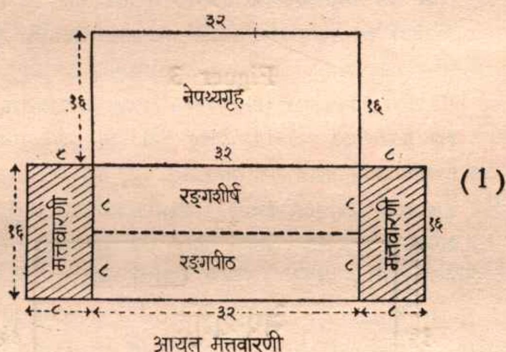
actors. It must also be remembered that the *raṅgaśirṣa* or the back stage area is rather crowded as the musicians sit here and the doors from the green room are located here in the back wall; so that there is a continuous movement of actors in this area. This leaves rather less space for production in this area. The *mattavāraṇīs*, therefore, have to be used as production area. And it appears to me that they were so used, particularly for playing balcony or terrace scenes, and for composing bifocal or trifocal scenes which often occur in Sanskrit dramas. Such placing of scenes, further, fully accords with Bharata's directions in regard to zonal divisions (*kakṣyāvibhāga*) of the stage.

The actual construction of the *mattavāraṇī* and the placement of the four pillars may offer some variations. Abhinava places them outside the stage block and suggests two measurements, 16 × 8 for the *āyata mattavāraṇī*, and 8 × 8 for *sama-caturasra*. The *mattavāraṇīs* can be constructed within the stage area also, on the two sides. (See *Figure 3.*)

It is presumable that the *mattavāraṇīs*, as well as the six-pillared construction of the *raṅgaśirṣa* were covered with a canopy or a ceiling executed in decorative style to add to the beautiful appearance of the stage.

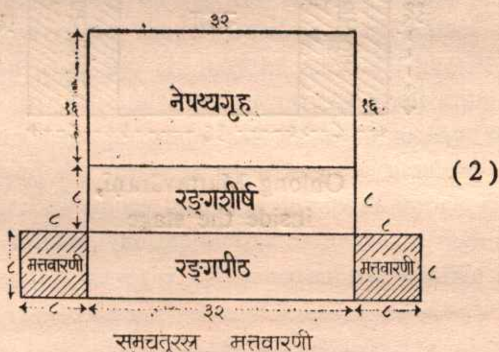
Figure 3

Mattavāraṇī



आयत मत्तवारणी

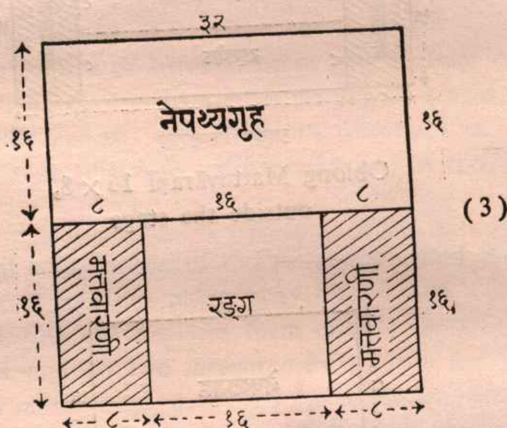
Oblong Mattavāraṇī 16 × 8, outside the stage



समचतुरस्र मत्तवारणी

Square Mattavāraṇī 8 × 8, outside the stage

Figuer 3



Oblong Mattavāraṇī,
inside the stage

(iii) The third constructional detail requiring some explanation is Bharata's direction that the *nāṭya-maṇḍapa* or the theatre-pendal should be *dvī-bhūmi*.[16] *Bhūmi* means floor, storey or level. Abhinavagupta mentions several opinions which suggest different constructional ideas: (a) *Dvi-bhūmi* may mean two levels; and this is secured by the floor-level of the playhouse and the elevated level of the raised stage. (b) An outer wall all round the theatre may be built, at a distance of 8 *hastas* from the inner wall. This will provide something like a lobby or corridor, resembling a circumambulatory passage around the inner shrine in a temple, as Abhinava says. Such a construction provides two separated floors, and this is *dvi-bhūmitva*. In this arrangement the *mattavāraṇīs* can be constructed outside the stage as extensions. (See *Figure 1*, the shaded portion.) (c) *Bhūmi* may mean a storey. It may be a pendal-like construction over the stage or on the auditorium. In the first case the stage will have, so to say, two stories; and the upper portion may be used for playing scenes whose locale is an upper floor balcony, terrace, mountain top or heavenly regions. In the second case the construction will be like a

16. NS. II. 80 : कार्यः शैलगुहाकारो द्विभूमिर्नाट्यमण्डपः ॥ See Abhinava's commentary on this, for the following discussion.

spectator's gallery providing additional seating accommodation. (d) Grammatically the text could be read as *a-dvi-bhūmi* inserting an *avagraha* ; but the emendation is of no use from constructional point of view. (e) Abhinava mentions the opinion of his preceptor, Bhaṭṭa Tauta, who takes *dvi-bhūmi* to denote the difference between two levels of seating blocks. This is a valuable suggestion as it sheds light on the seating arrangement in Bharata's theatre.

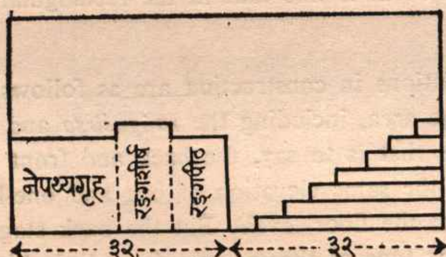
(iv) It appears that seats in the auditorium were arranged in rising tiers ; starting from the stage the seats rose gradually by a little higher level, so that the last tier near the back wall was as high as the stage itself. This ensures that spectators in any row will not obstruct the stage-view of those seated in the back row. Bharata directs that the entire seating arrangement should be so planned as to provide a clear view of the ssage.[17] (See *Figure 4*)

(3)

The oblong or rectilinear theatre is to serve as a model for the general plan of theatre building.

17. NS. II, 91–92a : इष्टकादारुभिः कार्यं प्रेक्षकाणां निवेशनम् ।
हस्तप्रमाणैरुत्सेधैर्भूमिभागसमुत्थितैः ॥
रङ्गपीठावलोक्यं तु कुर्यादासनजं विधिम् ।

Figure 4



Seating Arrangement
(Tier-like)

This represents one idea of *dvi-bhūmi*; another is represented by the shaded portion round the theatre, in Figure 1.

Bharata directs that the square and triangular theatres are to be constructed on similar lines with necessary variations, which pertain to dimension, measurement and stage construction.

The square (*caturasra*) theatre measures 32×32. In a triangular theatre the three sides are each 32. The division of floor area into auditorium, stage and green room is like that in the rectangular type.

Some variations in construction are as follows : The entire stage area, including the *raṅgaśirṣa* and *raṅgapīṭha*, that is to say, the back and front stage, has the same elevation of one and one-half *hastas* from the floor level. But the back stage in a rectilinear type of theatre may be a little higher than the front stage; in the square and triangular types the back and front stage have the same elevation and are equal.[18] Another difference is that, according to Bharata's direction, the front stage or the stage platform (*raṅgapīṭha*) in a square theatre is to be of 8 *hastas*. This suggests three constructional possibilities (See *Figure 5*). But the more important point is that the stage in

18. NS. II. 100 : समुन्नतं समं चैव रङ्गशीर्षं तु कारयेत् ।
विकृष्टे तून्नतं कार्यं चतुरश्रे समं तथा ॥
See Abhinava's comm. quoted in note no. (9).

Figure 5
Stage construction in a Square Theatre

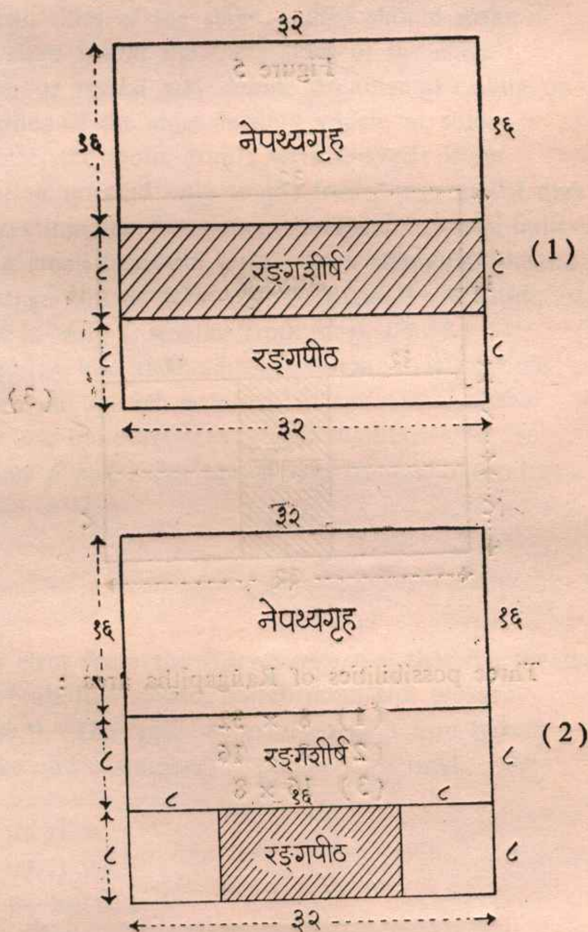
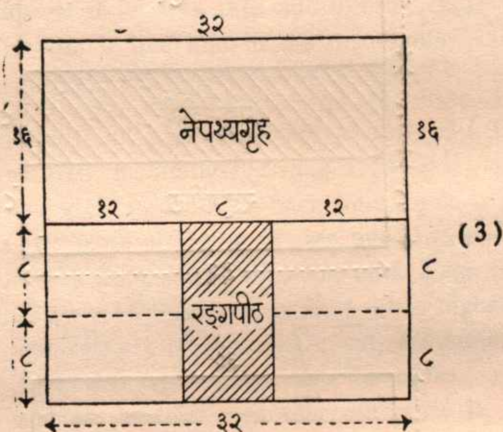


Figure 5



Three possibilities of Raṅgapīṭha area :

(1) 8 × 32
(2) 8 × 16
(3) 16 × 8

the square theatre is ornamented with *vedikā*.[19] Considering that *mattavāraṇīs* are to be erected on the two sides of the stage, *vedikā* should mean here steps round the three sides of the stage block; or *vedikā* may denote ornamental railing on the sides of the stage beyond which, at some distance, the *mattavāraṇīs* were erected; if the direction referred only to the front stage *vedikā* may suggest that the front stage (*raṅgapīṭha*) was built like a small beautiful altar. In a triangular theatre the stage will be triangular in shape.[20] A third point is, with a smaller front stage (8 × 8) projecting into the auditorium area, it is possible to provide special seats on the two sides of the stage for honoured guests and dignitaries. (See *Figures 6 and 7* for square and triangular theatres).

(4)

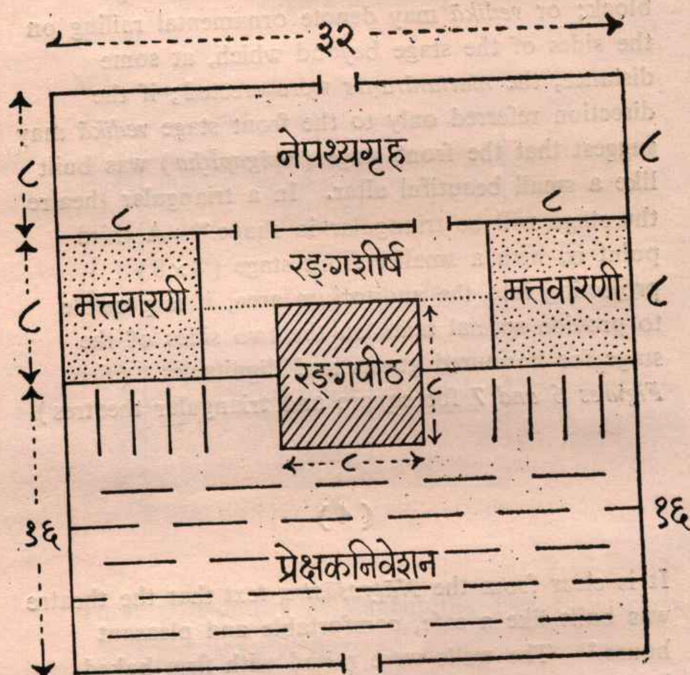
It is clear from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* text that the theatre was built like a safe, comfortable and pleasant house.[21] The walls were raised with firm baked bricks and a number of pillars were used. The

19. NS. II. 98.
20. NS. II. 102.
21. See NS. II. 75–85.

Figure 6

Square Theatre

32 × 32



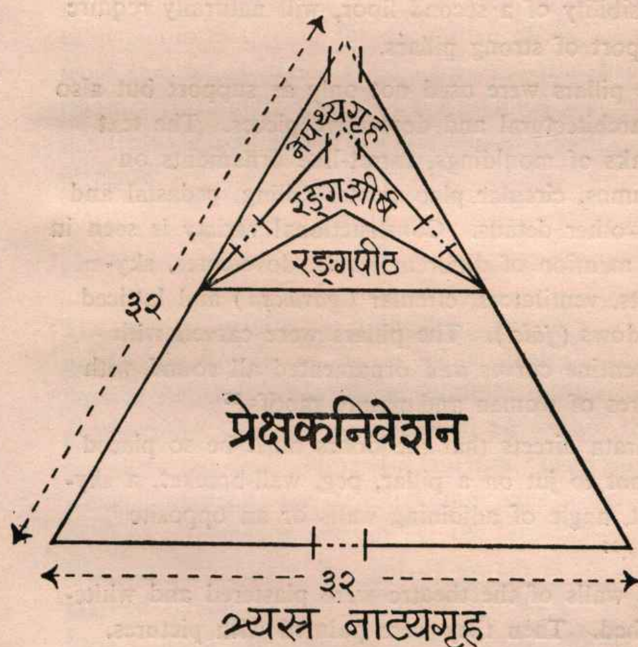
चतुरस्र नाट्यगृह

Rangapiṭha projecting into Auditorium. Vertical lines on the two sides of the projecting stage show special seats provided for the elite.

Figure 7

Triangular Theatre

32 × 32



The stage is triangular

mattavāraṇis were erected on four pillars each, and the *raṅgaśirṣa* was constructed with a set of six pillars. Bharata's direction that the theatre-pendal should be shaped like a mountain-cave (*śaila-guhā*[22]) suggests that the ceiling was high, arched and curved, and like a dome. This, as well as the possibility of a second floor, will naturally require support of strong pillars.

The pillars were used not only as support but also as architectural and decorative pieces. The text speaks of mouldings, turret-like ornaments on columns, circular placements, railing, pedastal and and other details. Constructional variety is seen in the mention of different levels, dove-cotes, sky-lights, ventilators, circular (*gavākṣa*) and latticed windows (*jāla*). The pillars were carved with serpentine curves and ornamented all round with figures of women and nature motifs.[23]

Bharata directs that the doors must be so placed as not to jut on a pillar, peg, wall-bracket, a sky-light, angle of adjoining walls or an opposite door.[24]

The walls of the theatre were plastered and white-washed. Then they were painted with pictures.

22. NS. II. 80. See note no. (16)
23. NS. II. 75–80.
24. NS. II. 79–80.

The pictures depicted men and women, clusters of creepers, and amorous pleasures of human beings.[25] It may be presumed that the *nepathyagṛha* wall where the musicians were seated, the inner side-walls of the stage (there were no 'wings' as in a modern stage construction) and of the auditorium, possibly the dome-like ceiling as well, must have been similarly treated for decorative effect. Apart from the actual presentation of a dramatic spectacle Bharata certainly seems to have planned the built theatre as a real place of entertainment and pleasure.

(5)

The use of curtains on a theatre stage is a production device, as also a scenic device. Did the ancient Sanskrit stage use curtains in drama production? One thing appears to be certain that the early Sanskrit drama did not use 'drop curtain' which completely covered the stage before the start of the performance and during the intermissions. Bharata directs that the end of an act is to be marked by the exit of all dramatic characters who have entered the stage.[26] Such a ruling would be

25. NS. II. 83–85.
26. NS. XVIII. 23 : रङ्गं तु ये प्रविष्टाः सर्वेषां भवति तत्र निष्क्रामः ।

unnecessary if an act could have been ended by the drop of a curtain. The Sanskrit dramatists follow the direction by writing *niṣkrāntāḥ sarve* to mark the end of an act, even if one or two characters are left on the stage as an act comes to a close.

The *Nāṭyaśāstra* mentions *yavanikā* and *paṭa*. *Yavanikā* is mentioned in the context of *pūrvaraṅga*;[27] the first nine musical items are presented 'behind the curtain'; then the curtain is removed and all the following items of the *pūrvaraṅga* are directly presented to the audience. Although the verses mentioning *yavanikā* look suspect and are likely to be a later addition, Abhinava accepts *yavanikā* and places it between the *raṅgaśīrṣa* and *raṅgapīṭha*.[28] Presumably the preliminary items of *pūrvaraṅga* like the tuning and testing of musical instruments were done behind the curtain; possibly, the *nepathye* speeches may also have been delivered from the back stage behind the *yavanikā*. Granting the use of *yavanikā* on the Sanskrit stage in Abhinava's times, it is still obvious that it cannot mean a 'rolled-up curtain' familiar

27. NS. V. 11–12.

28. Cf. तत्र यवनिका रङ्गपीठतच्छिरसोर्मध्ये । तस्या अन्तरागतैः प्रयोक्तृभिर्नटैः प्राधान्यात्, यदि वा वैणिकादिभिरेव प्रयोक्तृभिः प्रयोज्यानि प्रत्याहारादीनि ।

to us from modern theatrical usage. There does not appear to be any arrangement on the ancient Sanskrit stage for hanging rolling curtains and for rolling them up or dropping them down whenever required. If the *yavanikā* covered the back stage, as Abhinava says, it must be for a few minutes only; for, the musicians sat here and had to accompany the entire performance from the beginning to the end; for this purpose they must have a clear and uniterrupted view of the whole stage. With the use of roll-up curtains Bharata's directions about zonal arrangement of the stage, and the simple device of *parikramaṇa* (walking round) to suggest a change of scene and location, would have no meaning. And it would be unnecessary for the dramatists to write such ridiculous stage directions as 'enter a seated Tāpasī', 'enter Śakuntalā lying down on a slab of stone and accompanied by her companions'; for no character can enter the stage in a sitting position or in a sleeping posture; and the direction would not be needed if roll-up curtains were in use.

What does *yavanikā* mean then? If *yavanikā* is the original word and *javanikā* its Prakrit form, it must be derived from the root *yu-yauti,* in the sense of 'separating'. The piece of cloth or screen is intended to *separate* dramatic characters or a stage scene from the view of the spectators for the

purpose of temporary concealment. *Javanikā* is to be derived from the root *ju-junāti*; it denotes the same, that is, a piece of cloth, something like a screen, but which could be *swiftly* placed and *swiftly* removed. It is possible to assume therefore that a small length of cloth was dropped like a screen to conceal the musicians as they entered the stage, took their appointed places and got busy preparing their instruments; it was then swiftly removed and taken away. A similar screen could be used before a character appeared in full view of the audience and took the necessary posture. This is *yavanikā-javanikā,* which Abhinava mentions; and it is a curtain or screen brought on the stage and taken swiftly away when its purpose of temporary concealment is over. Such usage of a screening curtain held in hand (by the characters or free actors) for temporary effect can still be observed on the Kerala stage which claims to follow the ancient tradition of Bharata.

The reference to *paṭa* comes in Bharata's direction[29] that when the singing of *dhruvā* (presumably, *prāveśikī*) has started and the curtain (*paṭa*) is pulled back, the dramatic characters are to make their stage appearance. This cloth curtain must be

29. NS. XII. 3 : ध्रुवायां संप्रवृत्तायां पटे चैवापकर्षिते ।
कार्यः प्रवेशः पात्राणां नानार्थरससंभवः ॥

on the two doors of the *nepathyagṛha*. It is necessary that these doors of the green room are covered with a cloth curtain; otherwise the actors would be exposed to the view of the audience (there being no drop curtain) even while they were preparing themselves for their roles or during their rest. These curtains appear to be mentioned by the word *paṭa*.

It is suggested that *paṭa* or *paṭī* (a feminine form or a diminutive) and *apaṭī* mean the same thing, a cloth curtain. In normal entrance of a character on the stage this curtain was held back; but when it was necessary to suggest some commotion, mental or physical, the character himself (or herself) 'tossed' the curtain and rushed on to the stage. This is probably what the stage direction '*tataḥ praviśati apaṭīkṣepeṇa*...' means. The Kerala stage practice appears to be somewhat different. Every character normally enters the stage behind a curtain or screen held in the hand; this is *paṭākṣepa*, dropping a curtain to cover the actor, his face only being visible above the screen. In order to show agitation the dramatic character does *not* use the screen, but rushes on to the stage straight; this is *a-paṭākṣepa*, *a* having a negative sense and implying that in dramatic moments of agitation and commotion the screening curtain is *not* dropped.

Use of curtains is natural in dramatic productions. But on the early Sanskrit stage its use appears to have been limited. The doors of the green room were covered with a cloth curtain (*paṭa*); and a small screening cloth (*yavanikā/javanikā*), manipulated by hand, could have been used. Elaborate use of curtains, and possibly of painted scenery suggestive of the scene of action and of change of scene, must have come with the passage of time and the availability of material and manipulating equipment. It must then have served the purpose of producing a more realistic impression of the dramatic performance, and must have also helped to entertain the spectators. But this is a later development. Bharata's stage appears to be simple. That is why he relies, while giving directions for production, mainly on *āṅgika abhinaya*, conventional gestures and movements, to convey the sense of time, place, journey, change of scene.

Abhinava (950–1020 A. D.) mentions *yavanikā*. Rājaśekhara (end of 9th and beginning of 10th cent. A. D.) ends the act in his Prakrit drama by the direction *javanikāntaram*. Literary allusions to *javanikā* as a cloth or curtain in dramatic

presentation start appearing from *Harivaṁśa* onwards.[30]

(6)

Among the later writers on dramaturgy, the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa* (bet. 450-650 A. D.) mentions oblong and square types of theatre and repeats Bharata's directions.[31] Śāradātanaya, the author of *Bhāvaprakāśana*, (cir. early 12th cent. A. D.) describes three types of theatre-pendals,[32] square, triangular and circular (*vṛtta*), the last being a new addition to Bharata's ideas.

Śāradātanaya describes particular use of the three types. The *circular* theatre is used for conducting a musical performance of or for the king and is attended by experts and special invitees, and the king's subjects from towns and villages. The square theatre holds the king's musical show which is attended by courtesans, ministers, merchants, commander of the army, king's friends and princes.

30. The references are quoted in my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, Introduction p. L, foot-note no. (120).

31. *Viṣṇudharmottara-pūrāṇa*, 3. 20. 4–7.

32. *Bhāvaprakāśana*, X. Gos ed. p. 295, ll. 7–15.

The *triangular* theatre is for holding performances for the inmates of the king's harem, queen, priests and preceptors.[33] It is possible that the author derived this information from his own observation or knowledge of contemporary theatric practice.

* * *

33. See my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, Notes pp. 295–296.

3

DRAMA PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

1. *Theatre and Production Technique*
2. *Dramatic Patterns and Vṛtti*
3. *Pravṛtti or Local Usage*
4. *Mode of Abhinaya: Lokadharmī and Nāṭyadharmī productions*
5. *Āhārya-Nepathyaja Abhinaya : Scope for nāṭyadharmī presentation;*
   Make-up, Costumes, Jewelry and Decoration;
   Pratiśira;
   Four kinds of Nepathya
6. *Āṅgika Abhinaya : Its Aspects :*
   Movements of major and minor limbs, postures, dance movements;
   Kakṣyā or zonal divisions of stage;
   Some Conventions

...10

7. *Vācika Abhinaya : Voice intonation ;*
   kāku ;
   Svagata, Ākāśabhāṣita, Janāntika, Apavāritaka ;
   Lāsya-aṅgas,
   Narrative and Descriptive passages

8. *Sāttvika Abhinaya : Meaning of Sattva ;*
   Importance of the mode ;
   Conventional element

9. *Preference of art technique ;*
   Factors of successful production.

(1)

The production technique of a play has some close connection with the kind of theatre where the play is to be produced. The production area of the stage, available equipment in the form of stage-props, curtains, drapery, lights and such factors determine, or at least modify, the staging technique which a director can use. In a modern dramatic production a director can take advantage of the facilities supplied by advances in material civilization and scientific development. He can raise on the stage a flat, a house, terrace, street, mountain, river, garden or forest, either by using suitable props or by scenery painted on cloth curtains or by using light wood-cuts. He can arrange on the stage appropriate pieces of furniture and other articles to create a credible illusion of the 'scene of action' the play demands. Similarly, the dialogue in the play is possible to be carried to all parts of the theatre, however big, with the aid of microphones and loud speakers. An atmosphere of realism can be created by the use of stage-props and special light effects. Carpenters and machinery-engineers can work together to give separate floor-levels, staircases, stories, or even a revolving stage. Advances in architectural and building techniques have made it possible to have a theatre and stage

of any dimension, in modern times, in order to present almost any kind of dramatic spectacle, and to accommodate a very large number of spectators. Sometimes, however, in spite of all the equipment available, a modern director can go back to the primitive technique and take a play to his audience without using the facilities, mainly through spoken dialogue and mimetic acting. Sometimes, even in modern drama productions, the staging technique may require a change or modification if the dramatic show were taken to a village or small town where the advanced facilities are not likely to be available. This has happened in modern theatre productions, and some of us are familiar with the modified or simple old techniques used in them either by choice or by necessity.

Such option of technique could not have been possible for the ancient stage productions for the simple reason that the mechanical, engineering and scientific facilities which we can use today were not available in the old days. And the usual natural limitations of a theatre stage, apart from the prevailing social taboos, have always to be taken into account in drama productions. The evidence of the Sanskrit dramatic literature clearly indicates that royal palaces had a *saṅgītaśālā*, a music-hall and an auditorium, equipped with a stage and screen (*tiraskariṇī*), where dance and drama

performance could be given for select audience. But, for the most part, public performances of dance and drama appear to have been given in open air, in courtyards and verandahs of temples or in open spaces in the towns or near a river-bank, on a temporarily erected stage, on the occasions of public festivals or religious holidays. Paucity of stage equipment and all these other factors would go to explain why the ancient production technique was simple, and relied mostly on make-up and costume, delivery of dramatic speeches, and use of mimetic acting and established conventions to carry the drama to the spectators.

(2)

From a theoretical point of view the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata appears to touch all aspects of drama production. Bharata recognises the freedom of the creative writer in turning out different kinds of story-scripts : war-like and vigorous ; full of love and tender emotion ; using an element of marvel or combining it with realism ; mainly a conversation piece ; or a delicate theme treated principally with music and dance ; and such other patterns, with varying length. These themes are naturally associated with different human emotions. Bharata

conceives ten such different patterns of dramatic composition, which he sets out in his *Daśa-rūpa-vidhāna.*[1]

The production of different kinds of dramatic scripts on the stage would demand, it is to be expected, different modes and styles of presentation. It is in this connection that Bharata's doctrine of *vṛtti*[2] is very relevant. The concept of *vṛtti* may be explained as follows: The Sanskrit theory assumes that the principal content of literature, both poetic and dramatic, is an emotional experience or emotive reaction to an experience of life. A writer presents some such experience by creating its appropriate paraphernalia. This consists of happenings or situations involving some characters, the stimulus to their emotion and the physical and psychical reactions that it naturally produces. These constructional elements or components are necessary to make the experience tangible for communication. Every experience naturally carries with it its own emotional stimuli and its particular physical and psychical reactions. In presenting them either through words only, as in purely poetic compositions, or through the additional mode of acting, as in dramatic writings, artists will have to

1. NS. chapter XVII.
2. NS. chapter XX.

see that they are appropriately conceived and convincingly conveyed. Each emotion has an atmosphere of its own and will be truly felt if its atmosphere were correctly created and presented. For example, *śṛṅgāra* or love is a delicate emotion and demands real depth with poetic and graceful presentation. On the other hand *vīra* or heroism would demand hot exchange of words, vigorous action and even fight. This is *vṛtti.* It is for this reason that Bharata links up the *vṛttis* with *rasas,* suggesting that a particular *rasa* needs the introduction of a particular *vṛtti.*

In the literary context a *vṛtti* is akin to the stylistic mode of expression; they were later developed as the *rītis* of writing. A dramatist cannot ignore the *vṛttis* in his literary script also; for, unless he provided appropriate incidents, happenings and emotions and used appropriate literary style and diction for depicting them through his dialogue, the efforts of a producer or an actor to render them convincingly would lose significance and responsive value. In the theatrical context the use of a particular *vṛtti* covers the mode and style of presenting a drama, delivery of dramatic dialogue and actions, looks and gestures, physical reactions and mental states used in carrying the dramatic experience to the audience. Derived from the root *vṛt-vart, vṛtti* denotes behavioural mode of speech,

body and mind. In this sense the *vṛttis* are not merely literary styles; they govern the entire human life; and that is the content of dramatic writing and presentation.[3]

Bharata speaks of four *vṛttis*. *Ārabhaṭī* is a vigorous mode, and naturally it is very suitable for a heroic play, a play of vigorous action, political intrigue and physical and mental clash. *Kaiśikī* is a delicate mode, and goes well with women characters, scenes of love and tender emotions, and is generally associated with song and dance technique of gestures and movements. *Sāttvatī* is a *sāttvika* mode, and is concerned with the operation of mind; a perfect harmony of body and mind is essential for an effective expression of emotions; the *sāttvatī* mode, involving the actor's identification with the emotion, is particularly important for theatric rendering of emotions. *Bhāratī* is speech; it is the verbal mode concerned with the delivery of dramatic speeches, written especially in grand and impressive diction.

The distinction made among the four *vṛttis* is, really speaking, theoretical. It is not possible to speak of any activity, say the authors of the *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*[4],

3. See my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, Introduction, pp. xxx–xxxii.

4. *Nāṭyadarpaṇa*, 3. 1–2, 5–6. See my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha*, Notes pp. 179–180.

which is devoid of physical, mental and verbal elements mixed together. And literary writing is a very complex activity. Likewise the dramatic activity in stage representation is physical, verbal and mental; an actor always tries to convey the total meaning of the drama by physical movements and gestures, by delivering the dramatic speeches with appropriate intonation of voice, and by expressing the mental states. When we speak of *four vṛttis,* therefore, it is only from the point of view of the particular element, physical, mental or verbal, which predominates at the moment. Otherwise these activities present a single complex, and *vṛtti*, as such, would be only one.

Bhāratī is a verbal mode and is common to all kinds of dramatic writing. *Sāttvatī* is a mode concerned with the rendering of emotions and no dramatic piece can do without it; in fact, Bharata rates the *sāttvatī vṛtti* above all else in histrionic representation. We are thus left with two essential dramatic modes, the *ārabhaṭī* and *kaiśikī*. But this accords with Bharata's statement made in another place that the dramatic production is of two kinds, *sukumāra* or delicate, and *āviddha* or vigorous,[5] corresponding to the use of *kaiśikī* and *ārabhaṭī* modes.

5. NS. XIII. 59-64.

The significance of the doctrine of *vṛtti* for dramatic production is that a play or a scene in a play is dominated by a particular action and emotion. It is the business of the producer-director (the sūtradhāra of the Sanskrit drama) to choose an appropriate *vṛtti* to present a play taken up for performance, and to vary it, if necessary, for playing different scenes in the play. It is thus necessary to fix the general mode and style of presentation when a play goes into production. For example, the dominating mode for a play like the *Śākuntala* will be the graceful *kaiśikī*; it will do for playing the fourth act, but it will have to be coupled with *sāttvatī*; and in the fifth act while presenting the confrontation between Duṣyanta and the āśrama party, as well as in presenting the encounter between Duṣyanta and Mātali in the sixth act, a touch of *ārabhaṭī* will be inevitable. The dominating *vṛtti* for *Mudrārākṣasa* must be the *ārabhaṭī*, as it is a play of vigorous action and political confrontation; but in presenting the scene of Candanadāsa's execution *kaiśikī* mode will be necessary at least in the beginning. It is the responsibility of the sūtradhāra or the director to study the play carefully and determine whether its content can best be carried to the audience by a graceful mode or a vigorous mode used in a general way, with touches of other modes demanded by

internal scenes. This is what *vṛtti* means in theatric context.

(3)

Bharata's doctrine of *pravṛtti*[6] may be considered along with *vṛtti*, as the two go together, and as it is a part of the general aspect of drama production which a director will have to keep in mind. Essentially, *vṛtti* is concerned with the expression--aspect and *pravṛtti* with the communication-aspect of drama. People in this world belong to different places and regions; they have their own land of origin and residence. They differ, however slightly, in their habits of speech, dress, food, and public and private behaviour. This mode of living and behaviour is what is called *vṛtti*, and *pravṛtti* is the knowledge and communication of such individual and particular modes.[7] *Pravṛtti* thus amounts to local usages so far as peoples' speech, dress, action

6. NS. XIII. 37 ff.
7. NS. XIII. prose passage following v. 37 : किं तु नानादेशवेषभाषाचारो लोक इति कृत्वा लोकानुमतेन वृत्तिसंश्रितस्य नाट्यस्य मया चतुर्विधत्वमभिहितम् ...। वृत्तिसंश्रितैश्च प्रयोगैः अभिहिता देशाः, यतः प्रवृत्तिचतुष्टयं अभिनिर्वृत्तं प्रयोगश्च उत्पादितः ।
Also, प्रवृत्तिरिति कस्मात् । उच्यते— पृथिव्यां नानादेशवेषभाषाचारा वार्ताः ख्यापयति इति वृत्तिः प्रवृत्तिश्च निवेदने ।

and behaviour are concerned. Bharata's idea of a drama is that it is an imitation of *lokavṛtta*. If drama, therefore, is to be *vṛttānta-darśaka* of all kinds of people in the world, it is expected that both the composition and production of drama will carry with them enough air of realism to make this possible. Of course we know that the Sanskrit drama, however ideal and imaginative it may be in its theme and conception, is set by the dramatists in an atmosphere of contemporary realism. This is where *pravṛttis* come in. The local usages have another angle also in the context of drama production. It is expected that a play would be taken to different localities and regions; and if the local audiences find a reflection of their own speech, dress, manners and behaviour in the production of a play they are bound to give a greater response and enjoy it better.

The four *pravṛttis* of which Bharata speaks, namely, Āvantī, Dākṣinātyā, Pāñcālī and Oḍhra-māgadhī, clearly show a regional and local connection from which they originate. A dramatic presentation may have such features related to particular regions and people. Bharata observes that the Southerners are very fond of music and dance and like graceful presentation; the peoples of the Āvantī country and of middle India feel the attraction of the grand and the graceful; the Eastern countries and their

people welcome the impact of full-blooded dialogue gracefully delivered and appreciate wordy rhetoric; to the Western peoples violent and grand action has the best appeal.[8] Observation of such regional predilections leads to the use of different *vṛttis* and *pravṛttis*. And Bharata feels that a director would do well to study and respect local usages and customs. In matters of costumes (unless the play were historical), food habits, social practices and taboos, a director could thus concede to the wishes and preferences of local audiences. As a point of realism, the use of regional languages and dialects has already been provided in the theory for different dramatic characters. A further concession is about dress, manners and behaviour of characters presented on the stage. And it may be extended to stage technique too, if necessary. It is noted in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that in certain regions characters enter the stage from the left or the right side,[9] as opposed to Bharata's stage where entrance and exit

8. *Ibid.*

9. NS. XIII. 49 ff. speaks of *Pāñcāla-Madhyamā pravṛtti* prevalent among Pāñcāla, S'aurasena peoples and those living in Kashmir, Hastināpura, and in the Himalayan regions and the countries situated to the north of the Ganges : The variations in stage technique, regionally, are as follows :

(*Continued on the next page*)

are from the back to the front and *vice versa*. To entertain and please local audiences a director may, therefore, use special technique, omit or modify dramatic speeches, vary actions and dresses, make use of music and dance. Such adjustment is the director's responsibility and it is a necessary part of production technique.

Use of *vṛttis* and *pravṛttis* can be realised and appreciated only in an actual theatre production of a play. But occasionally we may find a careful dramatist providing stage directions for delivering dramatic speeches so as to reflect the mood and emotion behind them, which will be suggestive of the *vṛtti* necessary to be employed. And, once in a while, a dramatist like Kālidāsa refers to a regional custom of dress as when Queen Dhāriṇī, in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, asks Paṇḍita-Kauśikī to dress

(*Continued from the last page*)

द्विधा क्रिया भवत्यासां रङ्गपीठपरिक्रमे ।
प्रदक्षिणप्रवेशा च तथा चैवाप्रदक्षिणा ॥
आवन्ती दाक्षिणात्या च प्रदक्षिणपरिक्रमे ।
अपसव्यप्रवेशा तु पाञ्चाली चोद्रमागधी ॥
आवन्त्यां दाक्षिणात्यायां पार्श्वद्वारमथोत्तरम् ।
पाञ्चाल्यामोद्रमागध्यां योज्यं द्वारं तु दक्षिणम् ॥
NS. Gos. XIII. 52–54.

Mālavikā in the bridal dress customarily used in Vidarbha for the occasion of marriage.[10]

(4)

A play is carried to the audience by means of *abhinaya*. That is the meaning of the word: *abhi*-towards; *nī*-to carry; to carry the play to the spectators, to convey its content and meaning to them. The means is *abhinaya* or histrionic representation, of which Bharata mentions four kinds, *āhārya* or *nepathyaja*, *āṅgika*, *vācika* and *sāttvika*.[11]

Bharata also speaks of *lokadharmī* and *nāṭyadharmī* productions. And it will be of some advantage to consider these two aspects of *abhinaya* before the four kinds are described. *Lokadharmī* is based on the natural state of things and the actual experiences of real life; it is realistic representation. *Nāṭyadharmī* is a specialized mode of representation

10. *Mālvikāgnimitra*, V. 3. ff. Vidūṣaka's speech : अद्य किल देव्या धारिण्या पण्डितकौशिकी भणिता । 'भगवति यदि त्वं प्रसाधनगर्वं वहसि तद्दर्शय मालविकायाः शरीरे वैदर्भं विवाहनेपथ्यम्' इति ।

11. Cf. NS. VIII. 7, 10 and ff.

and uses dramatic conventions and symbolic, artistic forms of *abhinaya*.[12]

There is no doubt that Bharata cares for realism in dramatic productions. For, after all, drama is an imitation of human life and is founded on human nature. Whatever characters are presented in a play, whether celestial, demonaic, human or from the nether world, they must make a traditionally conceived or realistic appearance, and speak, act and feel as human beings do.[13] In order therefore to make a correct impact on the spectators and evoke from them a proper response, a play has to be as realistic as possible in a theatre production. Bharata mentions several elements which can bring about such an air of realism in the performance of a play. For example, dress and general appearance, speech habits, actions and behaviour of dramatic characters are modelled on experiences of real life.

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12. NS. XIII. Read :

स्वभावभावोपगतं शुद्धं तु विकृतं तथा ।
लोकवार्ताक्रियोपेतम् अङ्गलीलाविवर्जितम् ॥ ७१
स्वभावाभिनयोपेतं नानास्त्रीपुरुषाश्रयम् ।
यद् ईदृशं भवेन्नाट्यं **लोकधर्मी** तु सा स्मृता ॥ ७२
अतिवाक्यक्रियोपेतम् अतिसत्त्वादिभावकम् ।
लीलाङ्गहाराभिनयं नाट्यलक्षणलक्षितम् ॥ ७३
स्वरालङ्कारसंयुक्तम् अस्वस्थपुरुषाश्रयम् ।
यद् ईदृशं भवेन्नाट्यं **नाट्यधर्मी** तु सा स्मृता ॥ ७४

13. See NS, I. 119; XIII. 33–34; XXV. 123,

Bharata's conception of *pravṛtti* and his recommendation for the use of Sanskrit and Prakrit languages in the spoken dialogue of the drama are intended to make the performance natural. More important is the play of emotions, and gestures and actions that accompany them, which are recommended to be as life-like and natural as possible.

But in spite of this care for realism one cannot ignore the limitations of a theatre stage. These limitations are of two kinds. There are certain happenings and actions which cannot be reproduced on a stage like fire, flood, journey, seige or battle. These are the natural limitations of a stage. Another kind of limitation comes in due to the condition of a stage at a particular time or place. The ancient stage lacked, for example, the equipment and facilities which a modern play-producer could use; so, reproducing the background of a happening or creating the scene of action, which is possible to some extent in a modern drama production, was not possible for the ancient producers. Limitations of both these kinds call, therefore, for a suggestive, symbolic or stylised presentation; and it is in this context that *nāṭyadharmī abhinaya* becomes relevant and significant.

It should not be surprising if *nāṭyadharmī abhinaya* appears to play an important part in Bharata's production techniques. The ancient stage had to find a substitute for all the lack of equipment and material means it had to face. There is another factor also. The *nāṭyadharmī* technique carries with it a certain grace and charm associated usually with art technique,[14] and which is perceived, for example, in a dance presentation which has a thematic or emotional content. Bharata regards drama production as a means of entertainment and a source of pleasure to the audience; and this is an additional reason why he recommends *nāṭyadharmī* technique to convey a sense of grace and beauty.

The *nāṭyadharmī* technique, based on conventions and forms of *āṅgika abhinaya*, is possible to be used in many aspects of drama production. Bharata speaks of different kinds of *abhinaya*, production devices and dramatic conventions in this regard.[15] For example : (i) Conceptual or mythological things like 'curse' or flight through

14. Cf. NS. XIII. 84–85. Bharata suggests :

नाठ्यधर्मीप्रवृत्तं हि सदा नाटयं प्रयोजयेत् ।
न हि अङ्गाभिनयात् किञ्चिद् ऋते रागः प्रवर्तते ।
सर्वस्य सहजो भावः सर्वो ह्यभिनयोऽर्थतः ।
अङ्गालङ्कारचेष्टा तु नाट्यधर्मी प्रकीर्तिता ॥

15. NS. XIII. 70–86,

air, if presented on the stage in concrete or personified form; the *Bālacarita* shows curse, Royal Glory etc. as characters on the stage; (ii) Mountains, vehicles, aerial cars, celestial weapons etc. similarly personified; Bhavabhūti makes the Jṛmbhaka missiles speak from 'behind the curtain'; but in *Bālacarita* and *Dūtavākya* attributed to Bhāsa the weapons of Viṣṇu and also Garuḍa appear as dramatic characters; (iii) The *nāṭyoktis* like *svagata*, *janāntika* etc. conveyed by special hand gestures and poses; (iv) Double roles of an actor; (v) Representation of a character contrary to his natural status; like an unmarried girl playing the role of a married woman or *vice versa*; (vi) All *abhinaya* executed with graceful gestures, steps and movements; adoption of dance modes; (vii) Appearance of celestial characters on the stage; (viii) Mental states of happiness or sorrow and actions connected with them rendered in set or conventional technique in stage performance; (ix) Imaginary divisions of the stage to indicate different locations (*kakṣyā-vibhāga*); (x) Poetic concepts and creations, decorative language, movements or ornaments etc. : these are some examples of conventional or *nāṭyadharmī* drama production. Thus, presentation of dramatic speeches, gestures and movements; rendering of emotions; certain actions like journey, riding, climbing or descending,

fights; change of scene; conveying the notion of time, season or place: such things may, as far as possible, be realistically presented on the stage; the alternative is the poet's words of description; and if they are rendered by symbolic, suggestive acting based either on dramatic conventions or dance modes, they come in the sphere of *nāṭyadharmī*.

There is ample evidence in Sanskrit dramatic theory and stage practice of women playing male roles or carrying an entire play production. Technically, this too comes under *nāṭyadharmī*. It is clear from the *Nāṭyaśāstra* that Bharata and his 'sons' trained Apsarasas or celestial nymphs for different aspects of drama production.[16] The reference to the performance of *Lakṣmīsvayaṁvara* in Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya* suggests that the play was produced by Bharata with the entire cast of nymphs. The *prekṣaṇaka* in Śrī Harṣa's *Priyadarśikā* was presented by harem maids; so Udayana could persuade the maid who was playing King Udayana's role in the dramatic spectacle to stand aside and take up the role himself.[17] Sāgaranandin thinks that *bhāṇa*, the dramatic monologue, is to be played by a single female dancer; that is, a trained actress and

16. See NS. ch. I.

17. See my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha* (NMS): Introduction pp. 153–154.

danseuse will appear in the role of Viṭa and carry the entire performance.[18] The *Kuṭṭanīmata* of Dāmodaragupta (9th cent. A. D.) describes the staging of the first act of Harṣa's *Ratnāvalī*. It appears from this work that there were troupes of drama-players wholly composed of courtesans or women artists, who played all kinds of roles. Naturally, female actors played male roles. The prologue to Bhavabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava* indicates the other side of the tradition, as the Sūtradhāra and his assistant announce that they will assume the roles of Kāmandakī and Avalokitā respectively.

The *nāṭyadharmī* has thus considerable scope in play-acting; much more so in Sanskrit drama, because Bharata views dramatic performance as a charming, stylised art.

(5)

In dramatic productions the appearance of characters and the stage setting are likely to attract a spectator's attention first. Among the four kinds of *abhinaya* the *āhārya-nepathyaja* may, therefore, be considered at the beginning. This includes make-up,

18. *Nāṭaka-lakṣaṇa-ratna-kośa*, Dillon's ed., ll. 2843–49; See my NMS, Notes, p. 271.

costumes, jewelry, garlands or flowers, and such accessories as go with a personality, and create the direct visual impact of character-impersonation. The *Nāṭyaśāstra* provides minute and elaborate instructions in this regard. They are aimed at producing a realistic impression, and yet they are not divorced from symbolic and suggestive presentation.

The costumes and dresses of the dramatic characters are intended particularly to be realistic in keeping with the established custom. In case of characters drawn from different levels of society the costume and appearance are supposed to be absolutely consistent with their social status, the locality and region of their origin and residence, their profession and religion or religious creed. The appearance of a *parivrājaka* or an ascetic with matted hair piled on the head, flowing beard, and a garment of reddish brown (*kāṣāya*) colour, is an illustrative case. The shaved heads of sanyāsins, Jain and Buddhist monks, is another illustration. It is expected, therefore, that the facial and body make-up of a dramatic character would be consistent with the role he is supposed to play.

However, there is a touch of symbolism in the instructions which Bharata gives. For example, the make-up of different characters[19] is done by using

19. NS. XXI. 95–113.

different colours. Gods or celestial characters are painted yellowish-red (*gaura*), Samudra, Himavat and Gaṅgā have a white make-up; Nara, Nārāyaṇa and Vāsuki have blue; and demons of all kinds are shown in dark colour. Similarly, kings and happy mortals are shown to have yellowish-red complexion; crooked and low-caste characters are dark; brahmins and kṣatriyas are *gaura*; while vaiśyas and śūdras have a bluish complexion. Such distinctive colouring is used to distinguish the characters and suggest the world to which they belong and their social status. The ideas may have been derived from some conventions or tradition generally established among the prople.

Suitable beards[20] have to be provided for male characters as part of their make-up. Generally celestial characters, royal personages, king's officers etc. will appear with clean faces and shaven cheeks; and in case beard is to be used, it will have to be properly trimmed with razor and a pair of scissors. The hair used for sticking a beard may be coloured to suggest a particular mental condition, like blue hair for distressed persons, those in calamity or in penance.

20. NS. XXI. 114–120.

Such suggestive symbolism is seen in the use of garments and ornaments also.[21] For example, white garments are to be used for ritual and auspicious worship, in religious observances and in marriage ceremony. Divine and semi-divine characters will use a picturesque and multi-coloured costume. Brahmins, royal priest, ministers and royal officers, as well as the men of the three castes will generally wear clean and white garments. Ascetics will have a dress of barks and skins, wandering ascetics reddish-brown garments. Mad or intoxicated persons, travellers and men in calamity will be shown in soiled (*malina*) garments. Kings will generally use picturesque and many-coloured costume; in the context of war, fight etc. they will wear an armour and carry appropriate weapons.

Bharata's instructions in regard to the use of ornaments, hair-styles are on similar lines, partly realistic, partly symbolic and suggestive. Celestial men and women will have hair piled on head (*śikhaṇḍaka*) and use pearls. Consorts of gods will use green garments and the same coloured jewelry; Yakṣa women and apsarasas will use jewels; gandharva women will use reddish garments, rubies, and carry a lute. Rākṣasīs will have black garments, white teeth and blue gems. Muni-kanyā

21. NS. XXI. 55-90; 121-138,

will appear with hair in a single plaid (*ekaveṇī*), no jewels, and dress appropriate for forest-dwelling. The hair-style for the Vidūṣaka will be that the hair will be arranged on the head like crow's feet (*kākapada*) or he and a ceṭa may have three tufts of hair on the head (*tri-śikha*) or a shaven head.[22]

Bharata's mention of *pratiśira* or *pratiśīrṣaka*[23] refers, on the one hand, to crowns and head-dresses and, on the other hand, to masks. The masks were prepared with ash or chaff, possibly also soft clay, using an earthen jar as a foundation. Cloth was fixed on the shape with *bilva* pulp and oil. When dried up in sun holes for eyes, nose, mouth and ears were made with a sharp instrument; facial features were properly formed, and the whole thing was beautifully painted. The masks were worn with crown or head-dress. It may be presumed that the masks were used for symbolic representation, to represent certain gods or demons, like the ten-headed Rāvaṇa, and also animals and birds. Thus, the deer and the lion cub in the *Śākuntala* could be presented by a small boy wearing an appropriate mask and acting with correct gestures and movements. In other cases,

22. NS. XXI. 155. The first two may refer to peculiar head-dress also; see my *Vidūṣaka*.

23. NS. XXI. 139–156; 188–195; 210–211.

however, animals and birds would be represented by the dance technique, the dancer using *āṅgika abhinaya* mode, symbolic gestures and movements to convey the suggestive impression. The use of crowns and head-dresses is natural. Bharata recommends a full crown for the king, and half crown for the prince and other dignitaries.

Bharata's idea of *nepathya* includes four things :[24] *pusta* or model work; *alaṅkāra* or decoration; *aṅga-racanā* or painting of the limbs and make-up; and *sajjīva* or *sañjīva*, meaning use of living things like animals and birds in the course of dramatic production. The *pusta* or model work is effected in three ways: by joining together leaves or barks of trees, pieces of bamboo, skins or cloth; this is called *sandhima*. A property may be contrived or operated by some mechanical device, like pulling a string; this is called *vyājima*. A model may be prepared by wrapping, that is, by overlain layers of wax or lac; this is called *veṣṭita*. Obviously, the models are intended as stage property during the performance of a play. They will include several different things, like mansions, houses, temples, terraces, vehicles like chariot and aerial car, various kinds of weapons and armour, and immovable objects like a pleasure-hill; and also animals and

24. NS. XXI. 5-53; 161-164. Cf. also, XI. 94-95; XXV. 68-70,

birds. In fashioning such stage property light material only was used. The objective is to combine realism with the ease and convenience of stage business. Let us presume that some such stage property, which could be easily installed or carried personally by the actor, was used in play-production whenever possible.

Yet the limitations of the ancient stage are obvious, as we have seen. The decorations on the walls, ceiling and of pillars connected with the stage were fixed, and could not be related to the scene of action of a particular play in production. Stage property and props could be used only on a limited scale, and not for every performance. There was no drop curtain; and apart from the *paṭa* which covered the green-room doors and the *yavanikā* or *tiraskariṇī* used as a temporary screen, there were no curtains to aid the presentation of dramatic action or to convey the impression of an appropriate scenic background for it. These effects had to be left, therefore, to the imagination of the audience, or conveyed through the spoken word in the script. One more alternative was to produce these effects by established conventions and mimetic acting. And this is the sphere mainly of *āṅgika abhinaya.*

If the 'forest of Arden', which is the scene of action in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, was shown,

as authorities tell us, by putting a twig or a sappling in a corner of the stage, leaving the rest to the imagination of the audience, in the sixteenth century English theatre, there is no reason to question or doubt that the ancient and early Sanskrit theatre produced the scenic effects and represented certain happenings and actions with the help of the poetic descriptions given by the playwrights and by mimetic acting done by the actors. Incidentally, such a technique explains why the Sanskrit drama (like Shakespearean plays) is full of verses and passages which describe places, scenery, timings of day or night, seasons and atmosphere. What was not possible to be visually conveyed was naturally carried to the audience by the spoken word in the dramatic dialogue.

(6)

The *āṅgika abhinaya* has a very wide range. In a total dramatic performance an actor will have to use his whole body. He will be required to present the content of the drama by the *abhinaya* of the major limbs like head, chest, waist, sides, hands and feet, and the minor limbs like eyes, eyebrows, lower lip, cheeks and chin. Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* provides elaborate precepts in this regard, and chapters 8 to

12 are taken up by the description of *āṅgika abhinaya*. A student of *Bharata Nāṭyam*, the dance form, has to master this portion thoroughly. It will be seen that the *āṅgika abhinaya* in both the art forms, *nāṭya* and *nṛtya*, is the same, with this difference that *nāṭya* may not make use of several aspects of the *āṅgika* mode as it has in addition the written script to carry the content of the drama to the audience, which the *nṛtya* form does not have. It is in this sphere that drama and dance come close together in the ancient tradition.

The *āṅgika abhinaya* comprises the following: 13 different movements of the head; 36 glances; contraction or flaring of nostrils and cheeks and different movements of the lower lip like drawing in, pouting, quivering or biting; drooping of the chin, touching it with tongue, its agitation in gnashing of teeth; hand gestures which include 24 positions of a single hand, 13 of joined hands, and 64 dance gestures; 5 movements each of the chest, sides and legs; the different poses or postures (technically called *sthāna*). It may not be difficult to understand that the hand-poses, movements of the leg and foot are not singly used in dramatic performance but are combined with movements of other limbs and are co-ordinated with other aspects of *āṅgika* and *vācika abhinaya*. Similarly, there are special foot movements, technically called *cārī* and

maṇḍala, which have a particular relevance and use in representing dramatic action.[25]

The natural and realistic aspects of the *āṅgika abhinaya* are easy to imagine and understand. The suggestive or symbolic employment of *āṅgika abhinaya* which leads to dramatic conventions and mime will, however, need an explanation. In an attempt to represent the background of some dramatic event or action, for instance, stationary objects like the sky, time of the day or night, clouds, forest region, expanse of water, directions etc., may be indicated by raised hands in the *patākā* and *svastika* gestures, head raised up and eyes looking upwards; appropriate movements of eyes and glances will naturally accompany this *abhinaya*. With similar gestures of hand and head but with eyes looking down one may indicate objects resting on the ground. Sunrise or sunset may be indicated by appropriate gestures of hand, by eye-movement and the acting mode appropriate to wonder; midday sun by up-turned and half-closed eyes.[26] This is, indeed, a representation which involves the use

25. NS. VIII. 13–14; 18–39; 41–55, 57; 96–100, 102, 104; 105 ff.; 118 ff.; 130–135; 136–140; 141–146; 170–176; IX. 18–280; X. 3–6, 23, 30, 34, 52–70; 90–94; XII. 12–20, 43 ff., 91–103, 137–142; 167–175; etc.

26. NS. XXV. 1–10.

of several limbs of the body and comes in the category which Bharata describes as *citrābhinaya.*

The sensation of fire or smoke may be represented by withdrawing the body and covering oneself with cloth, as the feeling of cold may be shown by contraction of limbs and shivering.

To indicate certain actions and movements Bharata recommends the technique of mime and dance movements of hands and feet. For example, picking flowers from a creeper in a garden can be shown by an appropriate stance (*sthāna*), foot-movement (*gati*) and action of the hand and fingers.[27] Climbing a staircase to reach terrace can be similarly acted by the raised movement of each leg one after the other and keeping the eyes turned upwards. Duṣyanta's pursuit of the deer in his chariot will be shown similarly by mimetic acting, varying the steps, moving round or across the stage, and gesticulating with hands and the body the movement of chariot-riding. Urvaśī coming down from heaven by the aerial path to meet Purūravas is a somewhat complex action; but it is to be shown by the actor starting from the green-room door and moving forward with slow rhythmic steps, eyes

27. For *sthānas*, see NS. X. 51 ff., *gatis*, XII. See my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, Introduction p. xcvi, and the photographic pictures.

turned down, arms held a little apart from the body, and the palms held downwards and in horizontal position, gesticulating the downward flying movement. Long distance is to be indicated by quick and hurried steps, accompanied by hard breathing and appropriate facial expression of fatigue.

It appears that such technique was particularly used in playing scenes of fight and combat and in rendering their descriptive report. For example, Bhāsa describes, in the interlude to his *Ūrubhaṅga*, the mace-fight between Bhīma and Duryodhana. It is reported by three soldiers who are on the battle-field witnessing the fight. The fighters are said to move in a circle (*cārī*), dwarf the body (*vāmanīkṛta-tanu*), go down in an attack and so on. The terms used in the text of the drama are related to the dance technique of *āṅgika abhinaya*, and suggest that the spectacle, if presented, will be shown or acted with controlled and graceful movements, as otherwise a bloody fight cannot be realistically shown on a theatre stage. The same technique must naturally have been used to represent the fight between Lava and Candraketu in Bhavabhūti's *Uttara-rāma-carita* before Rāma intervened and stopped it. The finest and unmistakable example of the use of dance and mimetic technique is to be found, perhaps, in

Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya*, act IV, the scene of Purūravas' search for the vanished Urvaśī. Here Kālidāsa's script provides the necessary stage directions for the dance steps of Purūravas and for the songs and music that accompany his movements. The various objects, like swan for instance, whom Purūravas meets are not to be shown by cut scenery or painted models; they are to be represented by dancers who will dance the particular swan or peacock dance; and Purūravas will approach them with dance steps to put his query. This lengthy monologue of Purūravas which fills nearly two-thirds of this act is, thus, to be played as a *ballet* scene, accompanied by song, music and dance movement.

A part of this special mode of *āṅgika abhinaya* is natural and realistic; but the other part is based on symbolic and suggestive technique of dance and mime.

Absence of scenic devices to indicate or suggest the place of the dramatic action on the stage necessitates another kind of technique which Bharata describes by zonal arrangement of the stage, known technically as *kakṣyā-vidhāna*.[28] The Sanskrit drama

28. For this and the following see NS. XIII. 19.
See also my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, Introduction, p. xcvii ff.

(*Continued on the next page*)

could hardly use the principle of 'unity of place' for the action of an act; and the principle of 'unity of time' was used only in a general way so as to ensure that the action in an act would normally cover a single day. Students of Sanskrit drama are aware that the dramatic action within an act happens sometimes at different places, adjacent or near each other, or sometimes far removed from each other. It will not be surprising if a scene is laid in the heavenly regions or the top of a mountain, and is immediately followed by another scene within the same act which takes place on the earth. Even when such sharp difference in localities is absent, an act of a Sanskrit drama may show simultaneous scenes played at different localities or at different parts of the locale. Such scenes may develop independently and the dramatic action may or may not connect them before an act closes.

(Continued from the last page)

Read particularly,

कक्ष्याविभागो निर्देश्यो रङ्गपीठपरिक्रमात् ।
परिक्रमेण रङ्गस्य ह्यन्या कक्ष्या भवेदिह ॥ ३
कक्ष्याविभागे ज्ञेयानि गृहाणि नगराणि च ।
उद्यानारामसरितस्त्वाश्रमा अटवी तथा ॥ ४
पृथिवी सागराश्चैव त्रैलोक्यं सचराचरम् । ५a···
नगरे वा वने वापि वर्षे वा पर्वतेऽपि वा
यत्र वार्ता प्रवर्तेत तत्र कक्ष्यां प्रयोजयेत् ॥ ७

For playing such scenes Bharata mentions the technique of *kakṣyā*, according to which a producer-director will divide the stage into different portions, and use them strictly and carefully to enact the different scenes. This is *kakṣyā* or zonal division. One may presume that the back and front stage, as well as the *mattavāraṇī* area on either side of the stage, would thus be earmarked for a particular play production, and used to indicate different locales. Further, if the *raṅgaśīrṣa* or the back-stage area could be slightly more raised than the front-stage area in a *vikṛṣṭa* or oblong theatre, as Abhinava interprets the text, it is equally possible to presume different *levels* on the Sanskrit, stage, which could be used to play different scenes. With such zonal arrangement and possibly levels dramatic action could be performed by using familiar conventions and mimetic acting.

For example, Bharata suggests that the characters who have entered the stage first are to be regarded as being *inside*; those who enter afterwards will be *outside* people; they are to use one particular door for mnking their appearance on the stage and the *same* door for exit when they finish their dramatic business and depart. In this case one of the two doors will be marked for the entrance and exit of *inside* characters and another for the *outside* characters.

A change of scene or movement from one place to another is indicated by the simple device of *parikramaṇa*, a character or characters *walking round* the stage in a circular or elliptical movement with measured steps. The distance involved in such a change of place, whether near, at a reasonable distance or far away, is to be indicated by the number of *parikramaṇas* and the pace of the steps taken. This is a dramatic convention which the classical dramatists continuously and consistently use in their dramatic scripts in the form of a stage direction. This *abhinaya* technique will apply not only for indicating change between two places on the same level, but it may also be used when the change is from one place to another which is on a different level, like the storey or terrace, or earth and heaven; only additional *āṅgika abhinaya* will have to be combined with it to suggest the movement or journey. The stage zones or the imaginatively determined stage areas are particularly useful for playing scenes in which there is simultaneous action at two adjacent or different places, like, for example, inside and outside the house as in the *Mudrārākṣasa*, or in a garden on the ground floor and balcony of the upper floor as in the *Mṛcchakaṭika*. The *Aśoka-dohada* scene in the third act of the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, which developes into a tri-focal scene, can be played by

placing Mālavikā and Bakulāvalikā in the centre of the stage where the Aśoka is supposed to stand, the king and the Vidūṣaka in one of the *mattavāraṇis*, and Irāvatī and her maid in the other. The actors will perform within the marked areas which will represent different parts or locales. Since the green room doors leading to the stage are situated in the back wall, the movement for entrance and exit will naturally be from the back to the front and *vice versa*. A modification or local variation is always possible if, for example, there were additional two side doors for the stage, as we have seen. Normally the characters would enter the stage by holding the cloth curtain (*paṭa*) on the green-room door back; to indicate emergency or mental turmoil the convention was to *toss* the curtain (*apaṭikṣepa*) and enter. In the absence of a drop curtain the close of an act is indicated by all the characters leaving the stage and going into the green-room.[29] This is another convention which is corroborated by the dramatic scripts and is valid in prartice.

29. Cf. NS. XVII. 23 :
रङ्गं तु ये प्रविष्टाः सर्वेषां भवति तत्र निष्क्रामः ।
बीजार्थयुक्तियुक्तं कृत्वा कार्यं यथार्थरसम् ॥

(7)

Vācika abhinaya[30] is used for delivering dramatic speeches. These are not to be merely learnt by heart and recited. An actor has to use proper intonation, *kāku* or voice-modulation, rise and fall of voice-pitch, fast or slow tempo, broken words etc. These are the devices which are used not only to carry the meaning of the words but also to register the mood and emotion behind the words. This has to be done in all drama productions, and the director is expected to train the actors in speech delivery by continuous rehearsals. This is the principal mode for conveying the content of the drama to the audience; and since the speeches have to be a correct reflection of different mental states, to which dramatists often invite attention by stage directions intended for the actor, one would naturally expect that this aspect of *abhinaya* is *lokadharmi* or realistic.

But there are some special kinds of speeches in a drama which have to be delivered with a special technique. For example, the *svagata* or *ātmagata* speeches and *karṇe*. The former is what a

30. NS. XIV. For the art of delivering dramatic speeches see NS. XVII. 113-114, 130 (prose passage), and Abhinava's commentary on the portion.

character says to himself and is not meant to be heard by any other dramatic character; it is a revelation of a character's inner thoughts and feelings; it is a *nāṭyadharmī* aspect, but it is used in all older plays. *Karṇe* are words whispered in the listener's ear by a character; this is done to share a confidence with another character or to avoid an unnecessary repetition. While these devices are found in all old plays of all countries, the peculiarity of Sanskrit drama is seen in *ākāśabhāṣita* and in *janāntika* and *apavāritaka* speeches. The *ākāśabhāṣita* is a dramatic conversation conducted by a character present on the stage with another character who does not appear on the stage but is supposed to be present somewhere 'in the airy space.' The character on the stage starts a conversation asking questions, and the answers he is supposed to receive from the absent character are reproduced by him, prefaced by *kiṁ bravīṣi*, 'what do you say'? This is purely a dramatic mode, and must have been used to save the needless appearance of a character for a small part of few words, and to supply the required connecting link between dramatic happenings. Such *ākāśabhāṣita* has to be conducted according to the fixed convention and with enough realism to make it convincing. In the *bhāṇa* type of drama, however, which is usually a one-act and played

entirely by one actor, the *ākāśabhāṣita* acquires a special importance. It is here a total verbal expression of acts, incidents, happenings, thoughts and feelings of all the characters involved in the dramatic story, and which are supposed to be 'off the stage'. Along with the usual interrogation and gestures of receiving replies and statements the *ākāśabhāṣita* in a *bhāṇa* has, therefore, to be accompanied by mimetic acting and appropriate aspects of *āṅgika abhinaya* demanded by the dramatic context. The actor in the *bhāṇa* has to 'act' out the monologue in order to convey the visual impression of all that is supposed to be happening off the stage; otherwise the *bhāṇa* will be only a long lecture delivered with make-up and costume, and not a drama.

Janāntika is an aside, a private conversation between two characters from which all other characters present on the stage are excluded. The *apavāritaka* is a confidential revelation which a character shares with the audience; it is a secret which is guarded from all dramatic characters for the time being; and is a device used to create suspense. Both represent a *nāṭyadharmī* mode, because some or all characters present on the stage are supposed not to hear such a speech although it must be delivered sufficiently loudly to be heard by all the spectators. Bharata states the

mode of *tripatāka* hand-gesture (thumb and the second finger near the small finger bent, other three fingers stretched and held erect, palm held over one shoulder to suggest warding off) for delivering these speeches. Later theorists suggest that the *apavāritaka* is to be delivered by the character turning round, keeping the characters on the stage at the back and facing or leaning towards the spectators. Bharata's direction would suggest that *tri-patāka hasta* was used to convey both kinds of speeches, and the *apavāritaka* used the additional gesture of turning round.

Bharata provides directions for dream-talk, talk on death-bed, and for speeches to be delivered by old men, children etc. It appears that these speeches are rendered realistically. The dream speech (*svapnāyita*), for example, does not use any gestures of hand; it is delivered in a low tone of voice, the delivery is slow, words are uttered distinctly and indistinctly, there is repetition of words and full pauses, as if to suggest that the dreamer is struggling to remember.[31]

There is another aspect of *vācika abhinaya* which deserves to be considered. This concerns the long prose passages and narrations of which the Sanskrit

31. See NS. XXV. 85-94; 95-101. *Svapnāyita* is described in vv. 95-96.

drama is generally full, and which are apt to puzzle a modern reader and a producer of drama. Happenings which are narrated to provide connecting links between events of dramatic acts are, if possible, confined to short linking and indicatory scenes, technically called *praveśaka* and *viṣkaṁbhaka*[32] which are prefixed to a dramatic act. The dramatic theory also distinguishes between what can be merely hinted (*sūcya*) and what should be actually shown on the stage (*a-sūcya* or *dṛśya*) : and Bharata and other theorists following him give detailed instructions in regard to this division. And yet there are happenings and actions which are a vital part of the dramatic story and which cannot be shown on account of the natural limitations of theatre stage or for reasons of social propriety and moral decorum (*aucitya*). Many scenes of such type, like serious deliberations, seige, war, fighting, journey, outbreak of fire, rain-storm and shipwreck, are described in Sanskrit dramas in a florid and lengthy narration. The rendering of such speeches in a stage performance is governed, I believe,

32. *Viṣkaṁbhaka* is explained at NS. XIX. 111–112, *Praveśaka* at XIX. 114; See also NS. XVIII. 26–30, 33–37. Things not to be shown on the stage are indicated in XVIII. 38–40, XXII. 240–300. Post-Bharata dramatic theory is quite clear on these matters. See my *Nāṭya-Mañjarī-Saurabha.*

by the technique of what Bharata calls *lāsya aṅgas*,[33] which uses graceful and picturesque mode of presentation combined with mimetic acting and dance gestures. For example, some speech may be delivered by the actor sitting down, making no gesture of hand or movement of foot, as in an experience of anxiety or sorrow (*āsīnapāṭhya*). Sometimes a woman character, deeply tortured by love, may recite a speech in a natural manner but with intense emotion (*sthitapāṭhya*). Sometimes she may sit down and sing a wordless melody accompanied by the tunes of a lute and the rhythm beats of a percussion instrument (*geyapada*). In moments of joy a woman may envision the image of her lover in water during water sport, in a glass of wine on a festive occasion or in a mirror while she is performing her toilette; she may then burst out in a delightful cackle of words (*pracchedaka*). Or she may actually start singing a meaningful song gesticulating with dance steps and movements for the benefit of her lover; or she may don male garments, use Sanskrit, and sing and dance before her female companions for their amusement and delight (*puṣpagaṇḍikā*). A specially constructed Prakrit play or a dance drama will use special

33. NS. XIX. 117–135. See also *Bhāvaprakāśana*, GOS. ed., pp. 245–246.

language, and the delivery of speeches will often be accompanied by music (*saindhavaka*). Similarly, a man faced with two women, one his new love and the heroine, the other his wife, will use soft and delicate words, even verses, while speaking to them (*trimūḍhaka*). Two heroes or two heroines may be confronted in a situation; they may try to walk away from each other, use speeches to divert attention from one to another subject, or use emotional language (*dvimuḍhaka*). Sometimes the conversation may gradually rise in emotional pitch so that the entire piece is presented in verse and delivered with appropriate movements of the body and graceful gestures (*uttamottamaka*). In a different situation, a love quarrel for example, the exchange of words may be hot, quick, full of assertions and rejoinders; and to heighten the effect of emotional tension a dialogue of this kind may be set to suitable music (*ukta-pratyukta*).[34] These are, of course, dramatic modes of rendering speeches. Their use depends on the nature of the play and the scene. But if used, such modes will lend colour, variety and depth to the dialogue and enhance the enjoyment and pleasure of the spectators. Bharata calls them *lāsya aṅgas*; and

34. See my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, Introduction, pp. xcix–c.

lāsya is a delicate, charming dance mode appropriate to a woman.

It is such a special technique of presenting dramatic speeches that has to be used in rendering long, descriptive passages in the scenes of the drama. One must recognise that such passages cannot be merely recited; they have to be 'acted' in a dramatic performance. The actor while going through the words uses the entire repertoire of *vācika, āṅgika* and *sāttvika abhinaya*, playing and acting the happenings he is reporting through the speech. He uses movements, gestures and mime so that he makes the whole scene come alive, as if what he is reporting or narrating were taking place actually on the stage before the eyes of the audience. This technique changes the entire form and complexion of reportage and narration. It is in this manner the long reports of the spies of Cāṇakya and Rākṣasa in the *Mudrārākṣasa*, the long passages in Bhavabhūti's plays, Sundaraka's description of the progress of war in the *Veṇīsaṁhāra*, the narration of the bandit's attack in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, and such other scenes in Sanskrit dramas have to be played. Bhāsa's *Dūtavākya*, where one character Duryodhana plays the whole Kaurava assembly, would afford an interesting example of the use of this production technique which combines *abhinaya* and mime with the delivery of a speech. Fights

described in the Sanskrit plays, the search of Purūravas for the lost Urvaśī, and the special mode of *bhāṇa* are examples of similar technique, which have been mentioned earlier.

(8)

The precise meaning of *sattva* in the *sāttvika abhinaya*, which is an important aspect of histrionic representation, can be gathered from two different statements of Bharata. In the section on *abhinaya* Bharata says that *sattva* is, in essence, human body. *Bhāva* or emotional states arise from *sattva*, that is, due to the association of human mind with body. The emotional states find an adequate expression through the body. A simple and natural expression of an emotional state is called *hāva*. When the expression, through gesture, flourish or movement, acquires a delicate and charming quality, it is called *helā*. *Helā*, *hāva* and *bhāva* are, thus, mutually connected and all of them represent aspects of *sattva*; they belong to the body and rest in the physical nature of man. The mental state is called *bhāva*, because when it is represented through *sattva* or physical manifestations it produces an awareness

(*bhāvayati*) of its existence, and of the poet's inmost feeling and intent.[35]

The close connection between *sattva* and *bhāva* leads to the second meaning of the word. In its own nature *sattva* is something invisible; but it is the foundation of emotional states (*bhāvasaṁśraya*). So, in the context of *sāttvika bhāvas*, Bharata says that *sattva* originates in mind. It denotes the equipoised state of mind. When the mind attains perfect concentration *sattva* is produced.[36] Combining the two senses, mind and physical manifestation, *sāttvika abhinaya* means the mode of psycho-physical or psycho-somatic representation. It denotes that mode, and an ability on the part of an actor whereby he concentrates his mind fully on the mental state to be represented and renders it

35. See NS. XXII. 3, 6–8 :

अव्यक्तरूपं सत्त्वं हि विज्ञेयं भावसंश्रयम् ।…३*a*
देहात्मकं भवेत् सत्त्वं सत्त्वाद् भावः समुत्थितः ।
भावात् समुत्थितो हावो हावाद् हेला समुत्थिता ॥ ६
हेला हावश्च भावश्च परस्परसमुत्थिताः ।
सत्त्वभेदे भवन्त्येते शरीरे प्रकृतिस्थिताः ॥ ७
वागङ्गमुखरागैश्च सत्त्वेनाभिनयेन च ।
कवेरन्तर्गतं भावं भावयन् भाव उच्यते ॥ ८

36. NS. VII. prose passage following v. 93 :
इह हि सत्त्वं नाम मनःप्रभवम् । तच्च समाहितमनस्त्वाद् उच्यते ।
मनसः समाधौ सत्त्वनिष्पत्तिर्भवति ॥

with convincing facial expression and physical manifestation, as if the state is his own as in real life.

The importance of *sattva* for the business of drama cannot be over-emphasised. Our own emotional states, and the physical expression they naturally find, are a real and valid experience for us. If drama is to imitate human life and character, how can it ignore emotional states and their physical manifestation? A responsible and true actor, whatever the real condition of his mind may be, must acquire the ability to show sorrow or joy if the dramatic situation demands such a showing; he must produce appropriate physical reactions, facial expression, voice-intonation and symptoms of tears or jubilation, in order to carry a convincing impression to the spectators of sorrow or happiness as the case may be. Such a piece of acting cannot be thoroughly realistic and convincing unless an actor has learnt to *live* the role, and not merely *play* it. This cannot be possible without full concentration of mind and the actor's ability to identify himself with the emotional state. This is *sāttva*;[37] and the *abhinaya* in which *sattva* is present is rightly called by Bharata to be supreme acting.[38]

37. *Ibid.*

38. Cf. NS. XXII. 1-2 :

(*Continued on the next page*)

In the category of *abhinaya sāttvika* is mentioned as the fourth kind. But it is easy to see that it must underlie the *vācika* and *āṅgika abhinaya* as well. Otherwise the delivery of dramatic speeches and the gestures and the movements of the body would be mechanical. A concentrated mind must work behind every kind of *abhinaya* in order that a dramatic production becomes a living experience for the moment to the audience, demanding and drawing full emotional response from them.

It is likely that, in course of time, some conventions may have come into operation for expressing emotions in theatrical performances. They would help an actor to carry the emotion to the audience and the audience too would find it easy to grasp the familiar symbol in order to understand and appreciate the emotion rendered before them. Such conventions for expressing emotions are always found to be existing, and they become established devices for histrionic representation in dramatic or dance performances. Apart from the theatre tradition which is at their back, we are willing to

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(Continued from the last page)

सामान्याभिनयो नाम ज्ञेयो वागङ्गसत्वजः ।
तत्र कार्यः प्रयत्नस्तु नाट्यं सत्त्वे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥
सत्वातिरिक्तोऽभिनयो ज्येष्ठ इत्यभिधीयते ।
समसत्त्वो भवेन्मध्यः सत्त्वहीनोऽधमः स्मृतः ॥

accept them without objection because such art devices are rooted in real-life experiences. A typical case is the fainting of Rāma in *Uttara-rāma-carita.* A modern reader or spectator may think that Rāma's fainting umpteen times and getting up after a few moments to resume his dialogue is absurd, if not laughable; and he is quite likely to find fault with the dramatic art of Bhavabhūti. What is necessary to remember here is *mūrcchā* or swooning is a symptom of acute agony and unbearable sorrow. The dramatist uses it as a symbol and the actor is directed to use it as a conventional and familiar mode for the expression of profound sorrow.[39] The fainting, thus, has nothing to do with the literary art of play-construction; it is a theatric mode established on the stage, and the dramatist and the actor use it as a convenient device. With such a perspective it should be possible, I think, to view the static, conventional and stylised mode of Sanskrit drama production in a different light.

39. *Uttara-rāma-carita,* act III. See my edition, Introduction. Bharata describes *moha* (VII. 52–53) as one of the *vyabhicāri-bhāvas* and suggests its acting by unconscious state, aimless wandering, collapsing, shaking the head, loss of perception etc.

(9)

The production techniques of Bharata lean, on the whole, towards *nāṭyadharmī* representation.[40] This is so because Bharata recognises the limits of realism on a theatre stage. It is true that *nāṭya* is an imitation of life. But Bharata says that we cannot imitate God in His creation of the world. We cannot reproduce god's creation on a theatre stage. All attempts at such creation would result only in terrible fatigue and despair.[41] We have, therefore, to reckon with human limitations, and try to use as much as we can in the production of a drama, and create an illusion of reality. Where the illusion stops the *nāṭyadharmī* modes will have to be used to take the drama to the audience. This is not an exclusive notion. It is recognised all the world over that drama, after all, is a matter of make-believe. With all the equipment a modern theatre possesses, and with all the studied and

40. See Note no. (14) above.

41. NS. XXI. 200, 202 :

या काष्ठयन्त्रभूयिष्ठा कृता सृष्टिर्महात्मना ।
न सास्माकं नाट्ययोगे कस्मात् खेदावहा हि सा ॥ ···
प्रासादगृहयानानि नानाप्रहरणानि च ।
न शक्यं तानि वै कर्तुं यथोक्तानीह लक्षणैः ॥

deliberate effort at producing realistic effects, a drama production is still a make-believe or a 'willing suspension of disbelief', as Coleridge would put it. It is this inevitable condition that leads to special production techniques and conventions which an art form must necessarily use.

It cannot be denied that the special techniques, mime, song and dance modes have a pleasing visual and aural impact and a high entertainment value. According to Indian sacred tradition drama had a divine origin and it was created specially to meet the demand of a *krīḍanīyaka*, a plaything, a means of diversion and pleasure.[42] Bharata firmly recognises the ennobling, uplifting effect of drama;[43] but such an objective could be achieved only through the literary aspect of drama, the direction a poet would give to his composition. The production of a play as such must be a source of pleasure and delight to the audience before they absorb the teaching which the drama suggestively conveys. It is with this idea also that Bharata may have preferred the art techniques which carry with them a grace, delicacy and charm, although they may not be quite realistic.

42. NS. I. 8-11.

43. NS. I. 107-116.

Bharata recognises three factors of successful dramatic performance and production.[44] The actors are expected to be perfectly suitable for the roles they are to play, and to possess the required skills. This is director's and actors' responsibility. Secondly, the quality of the production is connected, on the one hand, with the quality of the dramatic script chosen, and, on the other, with songs and music and the entire repertoire of *abhinaya.*

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44. NS. XXVII. 98–103 :

तथा समुदिताश्चैव विज्ञेया नाटकाश्रिताः ।
पात्रं प्रयोगमृद्धिश्च विज्ञेयास्तु त्रयो गुणाः ॥

बुद्धिमत्त्वं सुरूपत्वं लयतालज्ञता तथा ।
रसभावज्ञता चैव वयस्स्थत्वं कुतूहलम् ॥

ग्रहणं धारणं चैव गात्रावैकल्यमेव च ।
निजसाध्यसतोत्साह इति पात्रगतो विधिः ॥

सुवाद्यता सुगानत्वं सुपाठ्यत्वं तथैव च ।
शास्त्रकर्मसमायोगः प्रयोग इति संज्ञितः ॥

शुचिभूषणतायां तु माल्याभरणवाससाम् ।
विचित्ररचना चैव समृद्धिरिति संज्ञिता ॥

यदा समुदिताः सर्वे एकीभूता भवन्ति हि ।
अलङ्काराः सकुतपा मन्तव्या नाटकाश्रयाः ॥

For translation and meanings see my *Bharata-Nāṭya-Mañjarī*, p. 277.

The third factor is the richness or brilliance of dramatic spectacle. This is concerned with costumes, jewelry and variety of stage equipment. When all the three factors combine harmoniously in a show they become an ornament of dramatic performance.

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GLOSSARY

Abhinaya: histrionic, acting mode of representation

Anubhāva: physical reactions to an emotional impact

Apaṭī (*paṭa, paṭī*): cloth curtain

Aṅgaracanā: painting of limbs, make-up

Apavāritaka: a dramatic device of turning the back on the characters on the stage to indicate a secret

Āhārya (*nepathyaja*) *abhinaya*: scenic background, stage props; costume and make-up

Āṅgika abhinaya: histrionic representation through body and limbs

Ārabhaṭī (*vṛtti*): vigorous mode of dramatic presentation

Āviddha: vigorous dramatic performance

Bhāṇa: a dramatic pattern, monologue, played by a single actor

Brahmamaṇḍala: imaginary or painted circle on the front stage where worship is offered at the opening of the performance

Bhāratī (*vṛtti*): verbal mode of dramatic presentation

Bhāva: emotion, mental state

Cārī: a circular dance movement

Dhruvā: a wordless song, using sounds of *svara* or rhythm beats

Hāva: simple, natural expression of an emotional state

Helā: delicate, charming expression of an emotional state

Janāntika: aside, private communication between two characters

Javanikā-yavanikā: small cloth-curtain used as temporary screen

Kaiśikī (*vṛtti*): delicate, graceful mode of dramatic presentation

Kakṣyā: zone, zonal division of stage for playing scenes

Kāku: voice modulation in delivery of speeches

Lāsya: the delicate dance mode (attributed to Pārvatī)

Lāsya-aṅgas: different dance and musical modes used in delivering emotional dramatic speeches

Lokadharmī : natural, realistic mode of dramatic representation

Mattavāraṇī : four-pillared, canopied construction on both sides of the stage, used for playing special scenes

Nāṭyadharmī : conventional, stylised mode of dramatic representation

Nepathya : make-up, ornaments and jewelry, stage props and property - which include *pusta* (model work, made by joining, *sandhima*; by wrapping or piling layers, *veṣṭita*; or by mechanical contrivance, *vyājima* - and *sajjīva* (*sañjīva*), introduction of live animals or birds during stage performance

Patākā, Svastika, Tripatāka hasta : dance gestures of hand used in dramatic acting for conveying special ideas (See Text, pp. 102, 113)

Pratiśira (*-śīrṣaka*) : head-dress, mask

Pravṛtti : communication aspect of drama having regard for local or regional usages in speech, dress, food, behaviour (See Text; pp. 83–96)

Raṅga-pīṭha : front stage

Raṅga-śirṣa : back stage

Rasa : emotional content of literature and its relish

Rūpaka: metaphor; drama (form)

Sāttvatī (*vṛtti*): emotion-expressive mode of dramatic presentation

Sāttvika abhinaya: psycho-somatic mode of representation with harmony of body and mind

Sthāna: pose, posture

Sukumāra: delicate, graceful dramatic performance

Tiraskariṇī: screen

Vācika abhinaya: verbal mode of dramatic presentation, using intonation etc.

Vibhāva: stimulant to the rousing of emotion (human and environmental)

Vṛtti: expression aspect of drama having regard for emotion, both in script and stage production (See Text, pp. 78–86)

Vyabhicāribhāva: transitory mental state

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[Bracketed numbers indicate reference in Foot-notes. Sanskrit words and titles of works are given in Italics.]

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THEATRIC ASPECTS OF SANSKRIT DRAMA













B. O. R. INSTITUTE. PUNE 4